

## Homework for Lesson 8: Wesley and the Methodists

In this lesson, you will learn about John Wesley's personal history and how it influenced him to start the Methodist movement. You will also learn about how that movement grew, spread to the United States, and became a new denomination called the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Over the last few weeks, we've been talking about the history of the Church, but this week we're going to start focusing more specifically on the history of the United Methodist Church. Later in this lesson, we'll be exploring some key events from the founding of the Methodism, but first we want to test your creativity.

Here are four phrases that refer to something significant in Methodist history. Provide a short one or two sentence explanation about what that phrase is referring to.

Here are the phrases:

The Christmas Conference.

The Aldersgate Experience.

Holy Club.

Circuit Riders.

It's really hard to explain something from your history when you only know the name, but not how it fits into the story. Now that we know a little bit more about these events let's see where they fit into the story of Methodism.

The founder of the Methodist movement was John Wesley, an English priest in the 1700s who focused a lot of his work on the ideas of holiness and God's grace. Let's learn a little bit more about John Wesley's story and what he believed.

Here is a short story about how Methodism grew and spread to the United States.

The Methodist movement started by John Wesley kept spreading throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland. Eventually, some of those who had joined the movement decided to move to the United States in search of new opportunities. Two of those immigrants were a former preacher named Philip Embury and his cousin Barbara Heck.

One day, Barbara caught her cousin Philip playing cards and was furious with him. Gambling was strictly opposed to the concepts of holiness taught within the Methodist movement and Barbara believed that

the move to America was making Philip pay less attention to his faith. As a result, she insisted that he start preaching again, even if it was just to his own family. Philip took her advice and started a small gathering with just his family. More people began to attend the family gatherings. This group eventually became the first Methodist congregation in America.

Wesley heard about this growing Methodist movement in the United States and sent a lay preacher named Francis Asbury to help them organize and spread the movement further. Asbury started the practice of circuit riding where a preacher would ride throughout the countryside preaching to a number of different societies that didn't have a dedicated minister.

Eventually, the Revolutionary War severed the ties between England and the United States. This was a particular problem for Methodist societies who were still technically part of the Church of England. All of the pastors in these congregations were ordained in the Church of England. This meant that many of the people who pastored American churches returned to England, leaving churches in a crisis about who would lead.

In response, Wesley ordained and sent Thomas Coke to be a superintendent of the Methodist societies. Coke, Asbury, and others traveled to Baltimore, Maryland on December 24th, 1784 to meet together and organize this new American church that would be separate from the Church of England. This meeting became known as The Christmas Conference and was the first General Conference of the newly formed Methodist Episcopal Church.

Today you've been given a lot of information about how the Methodist movement began, about how it came to the United States, and about it eventually became a church independent from the Church of England. But you might be asking yourself, why is this important?

I could tell you why it's important, but I'd like to hear you answer that question yourself. Write out why you think it's important that we learn about the origins of Methodism.