

Religions in America: Methodists

Who are the Methodists?

Where most of them live: Methodist churches are spread throughout the U.S. When the U.S. expanded west, Methodist preachers traveled west also, preaching and setting up many churches.

How many people are Methodist in the U.S.? In 1960, more than 12,000,000.

How long has the Methodist church been here? Methodists say their church began with John Wesley in 1738 in England. The Methodist church first came to the U.S. in 1760.

Methodists are well known for: Revivals, grape juice in communion.

Names of some Methodist groups: United Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Wesleyan Methodist Church, and the Free Methodist Church. Some related groups are the Pentecostal churches and the Salvation Army.

Where is their teaching from?

John Wesley say Christian teachings come from the Bible, your own thinking and reason, and teachings from the early church. Sometimes they will say their teachings are only from the Bible. But they often use their own thoughts and experiences to decide if a teaching is true or not. (Pentecostals often depend on their experiences.)

Read 2 Peter 1:19-20. What does the Bible say is the certain word we can trust? Do these verses say anything about using your own personal experience to interpret the Bible the way you see it?

What is Our Biggest Need?

Methodists believe that our goal is live as perfect Christians. Anything that blocks our way is a problem, especially sin.

Can We Help Ourselves?

Methodists believe that people have complete free will. Methodists say Jesus died to forgive our sins. God offers that forgiveness to everyone. It is up to us, it is our decision to take His forgiveness or not. And it is our responsibility to follow God's laws and try to become perfect. Yes, Methodists believe we are able to do good and try to please God.

Read Romans 5:6-8. What does God say about who saved us?

Methodists say we must have a perfect life. Read Romans 5:10. Whose perfect, resurrected life saves us?

What Do Methodists Emphasize as Most Important?

Methodists emphasize Christian life. They say that Christ died to save us, that's fine. But now what? You must live a perfect life and obey God's laws. Why? Because God wants you to do that and because that is how you know you are saved.

Martin Luther was worried about salvation. Luther saw that he was a sinner and needed a Savior. He saw the Bible teaches we are sinful and can't save ourselves, but Jesus paid the full price to completely save us. If you want to get encouragement that you are saved, look at Jesus and His work.

John Wesley was also worried about salvation. He said he knew Jesus was the Savior, but how could he know he was saved? Wesley said look at yourself and your life. If you are becoming perfect, living without sinning, then you can know you have salvation.

Lutherans emphasize faith. Believe in Jesus, your sins are forgiven. Then we can live a good life to thank God for His gift. Methodists say believe in Jesus, stop sinning, then you know you are saved. What does John 3:16 emphasize?

What Will Happen When We Die?

Lutherans say that people who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior will go to heaven when they die. Methodists say God will judge people in different ways. A person who doesn't know anything about Christ can go to heaven if he is a good person. A person who knows about Jesus must believe in Jesus to go to heaven. A person who is a strong Christian filled with the Holy Spirit must live a perfect life to go to heaven. Methodists believe the closer you come to God, the more strict He will judge you.

Does the Bible say people will be judged differently? Read these verses and see. Romans 3:21-24, Acts 17:30-31.

Do Methodists Have Sacraments?

Methodists think God does not give any special gifts through sacraments. They have baptism and the Lord's Supper, but they consider them more like a witness or memorial. Methodists believe we naturally have all the ability to live a perfect life. We don't need much help from God.

Where is the Methodists Church Going?

The Methodists don't emphasize right teaching very much. Their main emphasis is on living a good life. Their name, "Methodist" comes from their "methods" or ways of trying to become perfect. Instead of focusing on true Bible teachings, they focus on rules and laws to help them be good people.

Because they don't emphasize keeping true Bible teaching, they have become very liberal and lost much Christian teaching. Many truths they used to believe are now lost. Sadly, they are continuing to lose the gospel more and more.

What Do Lutherans Say?

We need to recognize both God's salvation and wanting to live a good life to thank Him. Read Ephesians 2:8-10. Methodists skip to verse 10 and make it a law. They say the way we live is how we can be saved. They are a big church in America. They need to go back to their Bibles and remember that Jesus is their only way of salvation, through faith in Him.