

CHAPTER 4

SPECIAL METHODIST IDEAS

We Are Helped To Be Like Christ

One of the beliefs which sets Methodists aside from other kinds of Christians is our idea of *Sanctification*. We believe that we can know for certain that God loves us. We believe that God will help us *grow toward our goal of becoming perfectly loving like Christ*. And, we call this process “sanctification.”

We know for certain that God loves each of us individually and totally, and that God’s love is absolutely unturnofable. As we try to live our lives the way Jesus taught us, God helps us along the way. The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and the lives of those around us. You remember that the Holy Spirit is how we *experience* God’s love in the world; it is through the Holy Spirit in us that God’s love is made known to others, and that we are made to be more and more loving like Christ. And, it is important to know that our acceptance of God’s SIGN is a beginning for us rather than an end. We are just beginning our journey, we have not arrived!

Have you ever learned to play a musical instrument or learned to ride a bike or even tried out for the football

team? You had a commitment to becoming perfect—the very best you could possibly be. Do you remember how awkward you felt when you first began practicing? There were so many things to learn and to remember that sometimes you may have wondered if you would ever reach your goal. But, even when you were discouraged you still worked toward improving a step at a time. Having someone you trusted to encourage you helped a lot. They really *believed in you*, and that made you more determined than ever to succeed.

So, you kept at it, and little by little, you made progress. Until, finally, you were doing a better job with much less effort.

Even when playing your instrument or riding your bike or playing football became like second nature to you, you knew you still had to practice.

Our growth toward *being totally loving like Christ* is very much like this. We are working and practicing and improving one step at a time toward our goal. It is a process in which God is helping us along the way, believing in us. It means growing closer to God until we become the people God wants us to be.



GOALS FOR A CHRISTIAN'S STRIVING

To KNOW God and settle my soul's salvation once and for all with a deep, quiet, assured trust that nothing can take away. This above all—this above all!

To LIVE so that all my time may count for God and his Plan for my life—in business or pleasure, asleep or awake, in youth or age, in great things or small, to do the Father's will and in that will find my peace.

To KEEP alive the spiritual glow of true

Christianity by prayer and devotions. Bible reading, grace at meals, systematic and unfailing attendance at church, fulfilling daily all spiritual duties.

To ADVANCE God's kingdom, beginning in my own life but moving at once to think and live for others in family, community, and nation—to right wrong, help the helpless, bind up the brokenhearted, give generously, love the brotherhood.

To LEARN through home and church and school and books and life's own experiences a richer wisdom as time goes by—that mind and soul, according well, may abound more and more in all knowledge and understanding, even to the understanding of the deep things of both man and God.

To LEAVE to God the things I cannot know nor am meant to know, in sure and certain trust that he who created this world and called us into being, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will keep and perfect in his own time them that are his—in life, in death, in that vast forever. Even so, Father, keep thou us all.

HOW WE BECOME MORE LIKE CHRIST

Just as there are exercises in sports or music to help us develop the skill and discipline we need to be good athletes or musicians, there are things we can do in our lives to help us become totally loving. John Wesley gave us the above list of suggestions. Read the list carefully and then complete the following questions.

The goal that would probably be easiest for me to accomplish right now is _____

Because _____

The goal that might be hardest for me to accomplish right now is _____

Because _____

One thing I am now doing that will help me reach each goal is ...

To Know _____

To Live _____

To Keep _____

To Advance _____

To Learn _____

To Leave _____

When you have completed the activities, find one or two friends in your group with whom you can share your thoughts and ideas. How are your ideas alike? How are they different? Can you think of any ways in which you help each other in your work toward being SIGNS of God's love in the world.

United Methodism, a Balanced Church

Whenever the Church of Jesus Christ in the world places emphasis on one part of the Gospel, leaving out or minimizing other parts, we do not hear the true message of God. Jesus brought us a message of wholeness, and it is important that we listen to the whole Word of God. Because The United Methodist Church takes this idea seriously, it is known as a balanced denomination. The United Methodist Church makes the whole Gospel central to its life and work.

The following list shows some of the important attitudes of the United Methodist Church on vital issues for Christians in today's world. Because we are a balanced denomination, these issues do not divide us as they do in other denominations.

PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Telling others the Good News

SOCIAL ACTION

Putting the Good News into action

DENOMINATIONAL LOYALTY

Affirming United Methodist Beliefs

ECUMENICAL ACCEPTANCE

Affirming that God speaks to us in many ways

INFORMAL WORSHIP

Maintaining a spontaneous and enthusiastic climate for worship; Not being bound by a rigid order of worship

LITURGICAL WORSHIP

Maintaining special orders of worship for our rituals so that their majesty and meaning are preserved

LAY LEADERSHIP

Each member is in ministry; lay and clergy members are given equal representation in the policy-making bodies of the church

CLERGY LEADERSHIP

The clergy administers the sacraments of the church and serves as a shepherd, enabling the ministry of the laity



God interacts with each of us as individuals. The way you know and experience God may not be the same as your friend or a member of your own family knows and experiences God. How, then, can we determine whether a religious experience is valid or not? The United Methodist Church gives us four guidelines by which to judge our experiences. These four guidelines are inter-dependent upon one another, and taken together, serve as a safeguard against extremism and heresy in our lives.

- *The first guideline is the BIBLE.* What does the Scripture have to say with regard to a particular experience or attitude? Is it in line with what we learn from the Word of God.
- *Secondly, we have TRADITION.* What have the Christians who came before us had to say? What did they find to be the truth about their faith as lived out in their lives?
- *Third, there is EXPERIENCE.* Does the idea or experience fit in with your concept of the ways in which God as has become known to you?
- *Finally, we have the guideline of REASON.* God gave us a magnificent tool when giving us our minds and our mental capabilities. We may not be able to understand all of the mysteries that surround God, but we can think about our faith, ponder it, pray about it, and seek to know more about it.

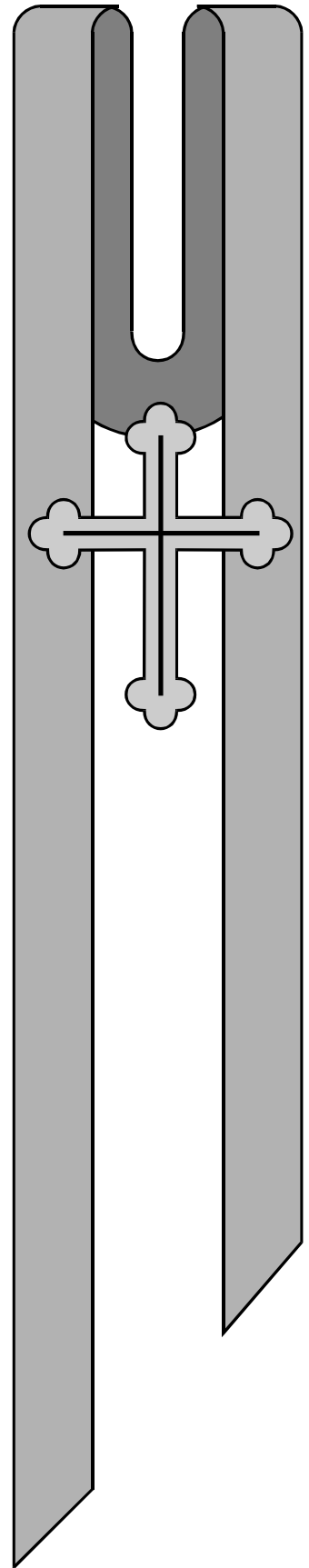
All Christians are Ministers

Every member of the United Methodist Church is a minister, called to express God's love in the world. Even young people are *full* members of The United Methodist Church upon being confirmed. You are not the church of the future—you are the church of *today*—with all of the privileges and responsibilities enjoyed by the adult members of your church. You, too are *ministers* to the people in God's world!

There are two kinds of ministry within United Methodism for persons who are called to full time Christian service. The *Diaconal Ministry* refers to laypersons who are certified and consecrated for full time Christian work. These vocations range from Directors of Christian Education in the local church to church and community workers to missionaries at home and abroad. They may be teachers or writers or artists—the possibilities for service as a diaconal minister are widely varied as well as exciting and challenging.

The *Ordained Ministry* refers to persons who are ordained as clergy in The United Methodist Church. Ordained ministers are permitted to administer the sacraments of Communion and Baptism. However, they, too, have a vast range of career possibilities within The United Methodist Church. They may serve as chaplains on college campuses or in the Armed Forces. They may be pastors in local churches or administrators of hospitals, homes, or other charitable institutions. They may also be teachers or counselors or missionaries.

Some ordained ministers in the United Methodist Church are appointed as *District Superintendents* or elected as *Bishops* in order to help with the administration and supervision of the church. United Methodist bishops and district superintendents have the responsibility of supervision over large numbers of United Methodist Churches in districts and annual conferences.



THE MINISTRY AND ME

The ordained minister(s) in our congregation is (are) _____

Our district superintendent is _____

Our bishop is _____

- * College Minister
- * Military Chaplain
- * Pastor
- Teacher in a Church College
- Social Worker
- Missionary to a foreign country
- * Evangelist
- Editor/Writer for a Christian publication
- * Hospital Chaplain
- * Prison Chaplain
- Director of Christian Education
- Choir Director
- Camp Director
- Church Business Manager
- * District Superintendent
- * Bishop

Examine this partial list of special full time Christian ministries. The list could be much longer. The ministries marked with an asterisk (*) usually require ordained ministers. All of the others can be either ordained or diaconal ministers. The ones I might be interested in doing are:

I would like to know if there are places where the following “career” areas (in which I am interested) can be full time Christian service _____

In the space below, name two areas in which you are a minister today. List two ways in which you show God’s love to others in your daily life.

I am a minister when I _____

and when I _____
