



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Introduction

Every Methodist hymnal begins with the same hymn, "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing," as an unofficial anthem for our tradition. The hymn begins with a celebration of grace:

"O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise;
the glories of my God and King: the triumphs of his grace!"

This fall we will celebrate and commit ourselves to God's grace each Sunday in our worship series, "Relentless Grace." The series will culminate with a **"Renew and Rejoice Weekend"** of worship and rituals, fellowship and reflection on **Oct. 10-11**.

Why call it "Relentless Grace?" God is relentless in loving us. Even before we realize it or begin to take steps to find God, God is pursuing us with grace.

Grace is simply the gift of God's love, but it is a word loaded with meaning. The very being of God is love (1 John 4:8), and motivated purely by love, God created and continues to sustain the world.

Since the world is deeply broken by sin and evil, God became human in Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of love. Out of love, Christ destroyed the power of evil by taking into his body that evil on the cross, and yet overcame it by being raised from the dead, a "triumph of his grace."

Not stopping there, out of love God sends God's own Spirit to every human and through all creation, bringing this triumphant, restorative power of love. Grace is truly relentless in pursuing us with the renewing love of God.

Grace works renewal in our lives over time. My grandmother kept a rock-polishing barrel in her garage, and I remember hearing it tumbling over and over whenever I went into my grandparents' house through the garage. It would stay on for hours until the rocks were polished and shiny. So it is with God's relentless grace polishing us into the people God created us to be.

One way the polishing happens is through the spiritual practice of hymn singing and reading. This set of worksheets will lead you each day through the season with selected quotes from Charles Wesley's hymns. Hymnody (the singing or composition of hymns) has been the chief depository of our doctrinal beliefs. But more than intellectual concepts, our beliefs are sung so that they reach down into our hearts and shape our habits.

The sources of the hymns are noted by # for those taken from "The United Methodist Hymnal" we use each Sunday or by numbers (e.g. 100.5-6) for those taken from the first Methodist hymnal, "A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists," which was published in 1780.

May your meditations bless you as they have previous generations of Methodists. The same Spirit that inspired them waits to renew you this fall.

Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Receiving Grace

Week of

September 20

KEY HYMN

***Come, Sinners,
to the Gospel***

The world is saturated with God's grace. Methodists believe that all people and creatures live in a grace-infused world. Grace is the unconditional gift of God's love. The world was created out of grace, the world is sustained every moment by this gift, and the world will be saved from evil by this grace. This divine love restrains the full forces of evil and makes it possible for creation to thrive.

Too often this grace feels fragile. When we see the violence and hatred in the world it seems that God's love is outmatched. Yet grace has an unshakeable anchor in the face of evil because it springs from the cross of Christ. When Christ died on the cross and rose again, the forces of sin and evil were defeated. Evil does not have the final word on reality. God's love is the first word and the last word on the world, and we take assurance in knowing that God's love is always stronger than evil.

Come, sinners, to the gospel feast;
let every soul be Jesus' guest.
Ye need not one be left behind,
for God hath bid all humankind.



John 1:1-5, 9
Romans 2:14-16
Genesis 9: 8-17
Psalm 19

Sent by my Lord, on you I call;
the invitation is to all.
Come, all the world! Come, sinner, thou!
All things in Christ are ready now.

Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,
ye restless wanderers after rest;
ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind,
in Christ a hearty welcome find.

My message as from God receive;
ye all may come to Christ and live.
O let his love your hearts constrain,
nor suffer him to die in vain.

#339

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

This week, where did you see, hear, or feel the love of God through nature or the arts?

Review your feelings over the past few days. What desires were tugging at you? How might focusing on the love of God help resolve or direct those desires?

Are there any regrets you have about something you might have said or done? Be honest with God about your guilt and turn those regrets over to God.

How is Jesus portrayed in this week's hymn selections? How do they express the proactive love of God?

Daily Verses from Wesley's Hymns

Day 2

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.
#196

Day 3

There for me the Savior stands,
shows his wounds and spreads his hands.
God is love! I know, I feel;
Jesus weeps and loves me still.

Now incline me to repent,
let me now my sins lament,
now my foul revolt deplore,
weep, believe, and sin no more.
#355

Day 4

Come to the living waters, come!
Sinners, ye weary wanderers, home,
And find my grace is free for all.

I bid you all my goodness prove;
My promises for all are free;
Come, taste the manna of my love,
And let your soul delight in me.
4.2,8

Day 5

Sinner, turn, why will you die?
God the Spirit asks you why.
He, who all your lives hath strove,
Wooed you to embrace his love.
6.3

Day 6

Sent down from above Who governs the skies,
In vehement love to sinners he cries:
Drink into my Spirit Who happy would be,
And all things inherit By coming to me.
10.2

Notes



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Reconciling Grace

Week of

September 27

KEY HYMN

*Let Us Plead
for Faith Alone*

Let us plead for faith alone,
faith which by our works is shown;
God it is who justifies,
only faith the grace applies.

Active faith that lives within,
conquers hell and death and sin,
hallows whom it first made whole,
forms the Savior in the soul.

Only let us persevere
till we see our Lord appear,
never from the Rock remove,
saved by faith which works by love.
#385

Contemporary life has created a sense of fragmentation. We feel tugged and pulled in too many directions. It has left us with a sense of insecurity that we seek to resolve by devoting our lives to material things and human authorities. We cannot face the wrongs we have done or the larger social evils we have tolerated, so we make excuses for ourselves. We are stuck in a fundamental alienation from ourselves and one another.

But God takes the initiative to put us back together, to reconcile our hearts and minds and relationships. Grace is the gift of divine love that puts us back together. As a gift, there is nothing we can do to deserve it. Rather, this reconciling grace is God's unconditional acceptance of us. Putting our faith in God's grace means we accept that God accepts us.

This divine acceptance creates the context in which the reconciliation within ourselves, and with others, can begin to take place. No matter how awful and broken we have become, God's grace is never outmatched by it. We can face the worst in ourselves because God never turns away from us. And so, we can confess freely the sins we have committed and face fully the trauma inflicted on us. This week's hymn selections by Charles Wesley describe the process and emotions of reconciling grace.



Romans 5:1-2, 6-11
Psalm 51
Galatians 3:6-11, 23-29

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

This week, pay attention to the different images of the human condition in the hymns. Which one(s) speak to you? Meditate on how grace is experienced in light of these different images.

What sins do you need to confess?

What parts of yourself feel unfinished and lacking?

Who do you need to forgive? What would it take for you to get beyond the bitterness and pain?

Daily Verses from Wesley's Hymns

Day 1

Ye slaves of sin and hell,
your liberty receive,
and safe in Jesus dwell,
and blest in Jesus' live:
The year of jubilee is come!
The year of jubilee is come!
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home.
#379

Day 2

O love, thou bottomless abyss!
My sins are swallowed up in thee;
Covered is my unrighteousness,
Nor spot of guilt remains in me;
While Jesus's blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries!

With faith I plunge me in this sea;
Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;
Hither, when hell assails, I flee,
I look into my Saviour's breast;
Away, sad doubt, and anxious fear!
Mercy is all that's written there.
182.3-4

Day 3

Sin's deceitfulness hath spread
A hardness o'er my heart,
But if thou thy Spirit shed
The stony shall depart.
Shed thy love, thy tenderness,
And let me feel thy soft'ning power;
Love me freely, seal my peace,
and bid me sin no more.
106.3-4

Day 3

I am unclean, unclean,
Thy purity I want;
My whole heart is sick of sin,
And my whole head is faint!
Full of putrefying sores,
Bruises, and of wounds, my soul
Looks to Jesus, help implores,
And gasps to be made whole.

Jesus, full of truth and grace,
In thee is all I want:
Be the wanderer's resting-place,
A cordial to the faint;
make me rich, for I am poor,
In thee may I my Eden find;
To the dying, health restore,
And eyesight to the blind.
105.2, 6

Day 5

Grant, O grant my last request,
Nothing do I ask beside;
Only give my spirit rest,
Rest from anger, lust, and pride;
Bring into thy perfect peace,
Give me faith to enter in,
Let me with thy people cease
From my own dead works of sin.
107.3

Day 6

Jesus, the promised help supply,
Support the feeble, fainting mind,
Nor let me in the winter fly,
But seek till I acceptance find,
But ask, till I am saved from sin,
And knock, till mercy takes me in.
116.2



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Renewing Grace

Week of October 4

KEY HYMN

O For a Thousand Tongues

O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean;
his blood availed for me.

He speaks, and listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

In Christ, your head, you then shall know,
shall feel your sins forgiven;
anticipate your heaven below,
and own that love is heaven.

#57

It is hard to comb your hair looking at yourself in a cracked mirror, but we see our best selves in the mirror of grace.

You are created in God's image. Every person is uniquely created in the image of God. And yet there are things we have done and things that were done to us that distort and cover up the divine reflection in us. We become trapped in these false identities, destructive habits, and toxic relationships.

Grace renews the image of God in us. The love of God, which comes with no strings attached, restores and completes who God made us to be. The embodiment of renewing grace is the Incarnation. Jesus Christ, who is the perfect image and likeness of God, took on the image and likeness of humanity in order to restore the divine image in us that makes us fully human. It is the irony of love: God became human to restore humanity with this infusion of divinity.

Grace renews us into the image of God, who is love. And so our renewal opens us to fully experience God's love, and gives us the capacity to love. To be loved and to love fulfills us. Grace works from the inside out. God's Spirit instills the renewing love in us. This frees us to center our lives in God's love and focus our lives on loving as Christ loves.

The renewing power of grace requires us to do two things. One, we must let go of all those things that distort the divine image in us. We reject the thoughts and actions and relationships that keep us trapped in our false selves. Two, we must embrace our authentic self as the children of grace. We conform our attitude and actions to this gift of love through a spiritual process of dying and being raised to new life in Christ (see Romans 6).

What defines us is the grace of God. What defines us is not our accomplishments or our failures. Our core identity is formed by the grace of God.



Romans 6:1-14
Galatians 2:19-20
Ephesians 2:1-10

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What is one thing — a habit, a repeated thought, a recurring attitude — that you need to let go of because it gets in the way of living in God's grace?

What is one thing that you need to start doing to keep you mindful of God's grace?

Use the hymn verse for day two ("O come and dwell in me....") as a prayer to start your day every day this week.

Daily Verses from Wesley's Hymns

Day 1

'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me,
I hear thy whisper in my heart.
The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
pure, Universal Love thou art.
To me, to all, thy mercies move;
thy nature and thy name is Love.
#386

Day 2

O come and dwell in me,
Spirit of power within,
and bring the glorious liberty
from sorrow, fear, and sin.
#388

Day 3

Maker, Saviour of mankind,
Who hast on me bestowed
An immortal soul, designed
To be the house of God,
Come, and now reside in me,
Never, never to remove;
Make me just, and good, like thee,
And full of power and love!
18.1

Day 4

Ah! give me this to know,
With all thy saints below;
Swells my soul to compass thee;
Gasps in thee to live and move;
Filled with all the deity,
All immersed and lost in love!
26.6

Day 5

The earth could to her centre quake,
Convulsed, while her Creator died;
O let my inmost nature shake,
And die with Jesus crucified!

The rocks could feel thy powerful death,
And tremble, and asunder part;
O rend with thine expiring breath
The harder marble of my heart!

The grace I surely shall receive;
Thy death hath bought the grace for me;
This is my whole desire, to live —
To live, and then to die in thee.
24.11, 13, 15

Day 6

His love surpassing far
The love of all beneath,
We find within our hearts, an dare
The pointless darts of death.
Stronger than death or hell
They mystic power we prove;
And conqu'rors of the world, we dwell
In heaven, who dwell in love.

We by his Spirit prove
And know the things of God;
The things which freely of his love
He hath on us bestowed:
His Spirit to us he gave,
And dwells in us, we know;
The witness in ourselves we have,
And all his fruits we show.
93.3



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Rededicating Grace

Week of

October 11

KEY HYMN

**Love Divine,
All Loves Excelling**

You can't drive a car without fuel, and you cannot live a moment without grace. Experiencing God's grace is not a one-time event, but it is a way of life. You are called to live a grace-filled life. God's grace becomes the animating force in our lives, and the rule of thumb for setting priorities. Every day we rededicate ourselves to the grace of God.

The grace-filled life is literally what it means: The Spirit of Christ fills us with power and wisdom to follow the example of Jesus's love. We are empowered by grace to do justice, love, show mercy, and create peace. The gift of the Spirit also directs us and teaches us how to follow Jesus. We cannot follow the examples of Jesus by our own wits or willpower. Rather, we surrender each day to the power of grace that enables us to be faithful followers of Jesus.

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down;
fix in us thy humble dwelling;
all thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation;
enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
into every troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit;
let us find that second rest.
Take away our bent to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
end of faith, as its beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.



2 Thessalonians 2:13-17
Philippians 3:12-16
Galatians 5:1, 16-26
James 1:22-27

Daily Verses from Wesley's Hymns

Day 2

A charge to keep I have,
a God to glorify,
a never-dying soul to save,
and fit it for the sky.

#413

Day 3

Jesus, thine all-victorious love
shed in my heart abroad;
then shall my feet no longer rove,
rooted and fixed in God.

Refining fire, go through my heart,
illuminate my soul;
scatter thy life through every part
and sanctify the whole.

#422

Day 4

Summoned my labour to renew,
And glad to act my part,
Lord, in thy name my work I do,
And with a single heart.

End of my every action thou,
In all things thee I see;
Accept my hallowed labour now;
I do it unto thee.

312.1-2

Day 5

Thy bright example I pursue,
To thee in all things rise;
And all I think, or speak, or do,
Is one great sacrifice.

313.2

Day 6

Jesu, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and think for thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up thy gift in me.

318.3

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What ministries of compassion, fairness, or peacemaking is God calling you to do?

Select one of the hymn verses that best expresses your dedication to God. Recite this verse throughout the week.

How often do you rely on God's strength versus your own willpower to follow Jesus's teachings?

Consider how you might dedicate the following to God:

your time and volunteering;
your finances, and
your emotional support for others.

Personal Covenant

I place my trust in the grace of Jesus Christ and open my heart and mind to receive his Spirit, who makes me whole through the means of grace:

[A Spiritual Practice]

[An Act of Service]

[A Goal of Generosity]



Schedule

Saturday, October 10

9:30 a.m.—*Hymns & Donuts*; Chapel and East Hallway

10:30 a.m.—Informal time and spirituality stations

11 a.m.—*Service of Encouragement* and lunch with Bread and Bowl; Fellowship Hall

Noon—*Group Reflection I*: “Worship and Social Witness at North”; Club Room

1 p.m.—Informal time, spirituality stations, and discussion groups

3 p.m.—*Intercessory Land-Prayer Ritual*; Church Grounds

4 p.m.—Informal time, spirituality stations and discussion groups

5 p.m.—Supper

6:15 p.m.—*Sound Bath* Chapel

7pm *Taize Service*, Chapel

Sunday, October 11

8:30 a.m. & 11 a.m.—*Rededicating Grace Service* (final Sunday of the “Relentless Grace” series)

9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—*BFW Offering of Letters*, West Entrance

Noon—*UWF Dinner*; Fellowship Hall

1:30 p.m.—Informal time and spirituality stations

2 p.m.—*Prayer Vigil for Immigrant Rights* with music by Indy Singing Resistance; Front Lawn

2:30 p.m.—*Group Reflection II*: “Methodist Heritage of Worship & Social Witness”; Club Room;

3 p.m.—Informal time, spirituality stations, and discussion groups

4:30 p.m.—*Love Feast*; Chapel (A love feast is an old Methodist tradition of singing, sharing stories and testimonies, and prayers of rededication. The love feast prepares the worshipper to receive communion.)

5 p.m.—*Communion*; Sanctuary

Come for Some or

Stay for All!