

## The Absolute Basics of the Wesleyan Way – Chapter 4

1. The authors make much of the distinction between the “forms of godliness” (ways and practices we do to accomplish God’s purposes) and the “power of God.” In theory these two always go together, but as we see in Wesley’s experience, sometimes they experienced the “forms” without the “power.”
  - a. What do you find helpful about the author’s analogy of the remote-controlled car? What aspects of the car correspond to the “forms,” which to the “power?” What is the point of each?
  - b. Where are some places in your experience of church life that you see the distinction between the “forms” and the “power?”
  - c. Which is easier for us to generate in church life, the “forms” or the “power?” Why do you think that is?
  - d. What are some areas in which you think (using language from their analogy) our battery power might be running low? What can we do about it?
  - e. Why do we so often settle for the forms without the power?
2. George Whitefield (pronounced “Whittfield”), a friend and coworker of the Wesley’s, added in a new form – at least new for that period in the English church.
  - a. Why did Whitefield (and later Wesley) take up field preaching? If we miss their motivation and goals, we’ll miss the most important parts.
  - b. Why did established authorities resist and oppose field preaching?
  - c. Wesley initially saw field preaching as being *against* the proper forms of godliness. What similar conflicts have you perceived in church life over the years, where one form was seen as “wrong,” “ungodly,” “irreverent,” etc.?
  - d. Assuming that some proposed “forms” CAN be wrong, how do we decide which are truly of God?
3. One of the provocative aspects of early Methodism was that it attracted the “wrong” kind of people, people who were no “regular church people,” people who were poor and outsiders to “polite society.”
  - a. How should the leaders of the church in England have felt about their ministry missing such large segments of the population? How do you think they may have explained the non-participation of so many?

- b. What are some populations in our setting, locally and across the land, that churches like ours aren't doing a good job reaching and connecting with? What explanations for our failure do we offer?
  - c. What can we learn from the early Methodist passion to reach people wherever they were?
  - d. What are our next steps as we seek to do something with what we've learned?
4. On p. 26 the authors say, "The key to Wesley's success was his ability to bring the people he reached through field preaching into a serious, methodical pursuit of Christian life."
- a. What "forms" and methods did Wesley use to accomplish this?
  - b. Though they don't use the word, what happened in these forms was "discipleship." What are the methods we're using today that are most effective at forming disciples, at helping people become holy, like Jesus?
  - c. What do you make of the author's "funnel" analogy? How did the funnel work in traditional Methodism? What structures do we have in the church today to accomplish the same things?
5. Consider the *work* Wesley put into early Methodism. He preached over 42,000 sermons in a period of roughly fifty years. That works out to an average of about 3 a day, seven days a week, year after year. He published many works, many of his own composition, plus many editions of other Christian writers.
- a. Why do you think Wesley put so much work into the movement? What were the effects of his work?
  - b. When we consider the effects – a massive, nation-changing movement – it's also worth counting the cost. Wesley did finally get married later in life. Getting married was one of the worst mistakes he made. If you want to learn from Wesley, DON'T learn how to do family life from him. How can we balance strong commitment to God's kingdom work through the church AND have healthy families?
  - c. What work is currently neglected in the church? How do you hear God calling you to step up and take up the work?