



ENCOUNTER
SUNDAY NIGHTS 6PM

Christianity &

HUMAN

WHOLENESS



Exploring the questions of Life

WEEK 1: CAN I BE PERFECT?

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Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
(Matthew 5:48)

The Methodist Church takes this teaching of Jesus seriously. We believe that this is not a suggestion – but is, instead, a command. We are expected to be perfect. But most people will respond to this by saying “Well I’m not perfect”. So what can this mean?

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, writes in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* that the Christian may reach a state of holiness in which he or she is in an instant able to show a total love for God and others. Wesley added that this is possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit within our lives. Wesley defines Christian perfection as “that love of God and our neighbour, which implies deliverance from all sin”. Wesley terms this total love for God and others “entire sanctification.” God expects our all and does not wish to share his children with Satan or any other.

Thus, according to Wesley, to be a Christian in the sense that God ultimately requires, one must be wholly devoted to God to the extent of perfect love. This is not human effort, but is instead carried on by the Holy Spirit from our initial justification to a progression toward entire sanctification.

Wesley points out that Jesus commands believers to “be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect” and that he teaches his disciples to pray that the Father would deliver believers from evil. To Wesley, Jesus cannot be lying when he tells his disciples to be perfect. Surely if he commands this, perfection is attainable.

He then describes perfected Christians are those who are growing to maturity – something that Wesley describes as having “grown” in faith.

And here is the important thing: he makes note that there are ways that even a perfected Christian is, in a sense, not perfect. For example, “They are not free from ignorance, nor from mistake ... They are not free from infirmities, such as weaknesses or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination” and includes that “one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour”. He mentions that one might have a false view “arising from prejudice of education” and, again, a “thousand such instances” that would not be considered sinful. He concludes, “We cannot avoid sometimes thinking wrong, till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption ... Yet, where every word and action springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a sin”

In Conclusion: we are saved from the imperfection of sin by the work of Jesus. However, this does not mean that God is finished with us: the Spirit of God then works in our lives to take us from the initial perfection of release from sin to a mature perfection that comes through spiritual growth.

In the words of St Paul: Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)

CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN WHOLENESS

19 June **“Can I be perfect?”**
(Pete Grassow)

26 June **“Does God heal today?”**
(Pete Grassow)

3 July **“How do I Forgive?”**
(Similo Sanqela)

10 July **“How is my body ‘a temple of the Lord?’”**
(Sam Bennett)

17 July **“What about Suicide & Depression?”**
(Similo Sanqela)

24 July **“What are your addictions?”**
(Pete Grassow)

31 July **“How can I be free?”**
(Similo Sanqela)

7 Aug **“Do you need Healing?”**
(Pete Grassow)

BMC YOUNG ADULTS

ENCOUNTER (Sunday Nights)

Contact Stanford January on 011 463-2333

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