



## **BUILDING UP THE CHURCH**



**Presenter: Mr. Clifford L. Harris, President**  
**Connectional Lay Council of the Department of Lay Ministry**  
**CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**OKLAHOMA CITY DISTRICT CONFERENCE**  
**OKLAHOMA REGION - NINTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT**

### **TEACHING SESSION**



**MARCH 17, 2009**

*Convening At & Hosted By:*  
**SAINT MARY CME CHURCH**  
1201 Martin Luther King Blvd  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73117

**Ms. Lola Galbreath, Local Lay Leader**  
**Rev. Thomas Ruffin, Host Pastor**  
**Mr. Otis J. Bennett, District Lay Leader**  
**Rev. Anthony L. Walker, District Conference Dean**  
**Rev. Dr. Bobby R. Best, Assistant Dean**  
**Rev. Dr. Richard C. Laskey, Presiding Elder**  
**Bishop Henry M. Williamson, Sr., Presiding Prelate**

# THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH WE STAND: THE PRINCIPAL DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE CME CHURCH

## OUR DOCTRINE

**DOCTRINE DEFINED:** Doctrine is something that is taught; a principle or creed of principles presented for acceptance or belief; a system of beliefs. (**Pronunciation:** dok-rin. **Also Know As:** dogma; code of tenets. **Example:** Watch your life and doctrine closely).

**IN THE BEGINNING** – John Wesley and the early Methodists were particularly concerned about inviting people to experience God's grace and to grow in their knowledge and love of God through disciplined Christian living. They placed primary emphasis on Christian living and on putting faith and love into action.

**What Do CME'S Believe?** We hold traditional Christian beliefs based on the Bible and our doctrine is the doctrine of early Methodism and the *parent Church, (The Methodist Episcopal Church, South)*.

## THE APOSTLE CREED

*(Our statement of faith and embedded summary of beliefs)*

**Modern English Version (From the Book of Common Prayer)** - *I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in: the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

## METHODIST BELIEFS

*(Methodist beliefs that are important because of their emphasis within the Methodist tradition)*

**Christian Perfection:** Though the Methodist never claimed that a perfect, sinless life was ever attained, they taught that it was attainable. The Methodists taught that every Christian must strive for perfection and should evidence some progress in that direction.

**Universal Redemption:** The universal redemption proclaims that Jesus Christ died for all people and that all people can be saved – not just a select few. It also declares that acceptance by Jesus Christ has nothing to do with one's position or possessions.

**Justification by Faith:** The belief that one is saved by faith in the saving grace of Jesus Christ alone is central to Methodist Doctrine. The service of the Christian life is an expression of one's faith – not the faith. It is because of the grace, the

unmerited love of God in Jesus Christ that men and women are saved – not because of anything they do.

The Witness of the Holy Spirit: The inner certainty which each Christian can have that he/she is a child of God as well as the conviction that God is at work in the world and in the life of the believer, bringing about His Kingdom and giving credence to the witness of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

Falling from Grace: Emphasis upon the real possibility that a Christian can live in such a way that he/she will reject God's grace even though it was once accepted.

The Sacraments: Methodists believe that a sacrament is a "visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace" instituted by Jesus Christ. There are two sacraments observed by Methodists: Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

## OUR GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

(The Executive Branch; The Legislative Branch; The Judicial Branch)

- I. Our ten (10) Bishops represent the EXECUTIVE BRANCH.
- II. The General Conference represents the LEGISLATIVE BRANCH.
- III. The Judicial Council represents the JUDICIAL BRANCH

The General Conference – The General Conference meets once every four years. The General Conference has full powers to make rules and regulations for the Church subject to the limitations of the\*restrictive rules. (\*Page 29 of the 2006 Book of Discipline). The General Conference is comprised of delegates elected by the Annual Conferences, one half of whom are ministers and one half laity.

The General Connectional Board - The General connectional Board meets once a year in May, except during the year of a General Conference. It governs the general affairs of the church with such powers as may be fixed and determined by the General Conference.

The Episcopacy – The Bishops of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church who are elected by the General Conference and consecrated in the historic manner of Episcopal Methodism. They form the College of Bishops comprised of all the Bishops of the church. The college of Bishops plans for the general oversight and promotion of the entire church and each active bishop presides over an Episcopal District and the Regions of which it is made up.

Judicial Council – The Judicial Council was voted into existence by the 1946 General Conference, and became operative in 1950. Prior to 1946, the bishops of the church were the final interpreters of The Book of Discipline. The Judicial Council, whose members (nine currently) are elected by the General Conference, guarantees "due process" for members and clergy of the Church and are the final interpreter of The Book of Discipline. Members, lay or clergy, may petition the Council for declaratory judgment (interpretation) of paragraphs in The Disciple.

# DEVELOPING AND BUILDING MATURE MEMBERS

## FOUNDATION SCRIPTURES

- Ephesians 4: 12-13 (12) "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ' may be built up (13) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of The son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."
  
- 2 Corinthians 13: 9-10 (9) "We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection (10) this is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority-the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down."

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## FOUNDATION STATEMENTS

- 1) The New Testament is very clear that God's will for every believer is spiritual maturity.
  
- 2) Paul states in Ephesians 4: 14 that, "We are not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching . . . But we are meant to speak the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ, the head."
  
- 3) God wants every believer to develop the character of Christ.

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**MYTHS ABOUT SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

*"Sometimes to understand what is true we must first understand what is not true!"*

**Maturity Myth #1: Spiritual Growth Is Automatic Once One Is Born Again.**

- a) Spiritual growth does not just happen once one is saved, even if he/she attends services regularly.
- b) Spiritual growth is not automatic with the passing of time.

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***The Truth Is: Spiritual Growth is Intentional!***

- a) Discipleship begins with a decision; it doesn't have to be a complex decision, but it does have to be sincere.
- b) We become whatever we are committed to! Just as a commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great church, it is also the way to grow a great Christian.

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**Maturity Myth #2: Spiritual Growth Is Mystical, and Maturity is Attainable By Only A Select Few.**

Because many Christians feel that spiritual maturity is so far out of their reach, they don't even try to attain it. Maturity, they believe, is only for "super saints."

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**The Truth Is: Spiritual Growth is Very Practical.**

- a) Any believer can grow to maturity if he or she will develop the habits necessary for spiritual growth.
- b) The believer must become spiritually fit by learning certain spiritual exercises and being disciplined to do them until they become habits (Character is developed by the habits one develops).

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**Maturity Myth #3: Spiritual Maturity Can Occur Instantly If One Finds the Right "Key."**

Books and other sources that promise "three, four, ten etc. easy steps to maturity" reinforce the myth that Christian character can be acquired overnight.

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**The Truth Is: Spiritual Growth Is A Process That Takes Time.**

- a) God uses a gradual process of change to develop us into the image of Christ.
- b) There are no shortcuts to maturity; it is a slow process.

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**Maturity Myth #4: Spiritual Maturity Is Measured By What One Knows.**

While knowledge of the Bible is foundational to spiritual maturity, it isn't the total measurement of it.

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**The Truth Is: Spiritual maturity is demonstrated more by behavior than by beliefs.**

- a) The Christian life isn't just a matter of creeds and convictions; it includes conduct and character.
- b) The New Testament repeatedly teaches that our actions and attitudes reveal our maturity more than our affirmations. *James 2: 18 says, "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do"* **James 3: 13 further states,** "If your faith hasn't changed your lifestyle, your faith isn't worth much."
- c) *Any strategy a church develops to build up believers must help them not only learn the Word, but also love it and live it.*

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**Maturity Myth #5: Spiritual Growth Is A Personal and Private Matter**

Most spiritual formation teaching tends to be self-centered and self-focused without any reference to our relationship to other Christians. This is completely unbiblical and ignores much of the New Testament.

**\*The Truth Is: Christians Need \*relationships To Grow.**

- a) **Hebrews 10: 24-25 states** "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another."
- b) The quality of ones relationship to Christ can be seen in the quality of ones relationship to other believers.
- c) Most people must be taught how to develop relationships.

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**Maturity Myth #6: All One Needs Is Bible Study To Grow.**

Many churches stress the teaching of Bible content and doctrine, but give little, if any, emphasis to believers emotional, experiential, and \*relational development.

**The Truth Is: It Takes A Variety of Spiritual Experiences With God To Produce Spiritual Maturity.**

**These experiences must include the five purposes of the church: (1) Worship; (2) Fellowship; (3) Bible Study; (4) Evangelism; and (5) Ministry. Thus, mature Christians do more than study the Christian life - they experience it.**

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**STRATEGIES/RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A. Raise the Level of Commitment:**

1. Focus on raising the commitment of leadership, not those who are the least committed, nor even the semi-committed in your congregation. "A rising tide raises all the boats in the harbor."

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2. Learn to ask people for commitment.

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3. Assist people in clarifying what commitments to make and what commitments to decline (over-commitment to the wrong things can form barriers to spiritual growth).

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4. With the understanding that people want to be committed to something that gives significance to their lives, - ask confidently for a big commitment (People do not resent being asked for a great commitment if there is a legitimate and great purpose behind it).

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5. Be specific in asking for commitment (particularly to Christ and the habits for spiritual maturity).

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6. Explain the benefits of commitment (personal, family, body of Christ).

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7. Build on commitment rather than toward commitment (start with whatever commitment a person is able to give, regardless of how weak it may seem).

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8. Celebrate events and give people a sense of accomplishment and motivate them to keep pressing on! \_\_\_\_\_

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**B. Help people develop spiritual growth habits:**

Teach habits that influence time, giving, and **\*relationships**. (Focus on how to establish four basic habits of a disciple:

1. The habit of time with God's Word \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. The habit of prayer \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. The habit of tithing \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. The habit of fellowship \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**C. Assist in building a balanced Christian Education Program, using the five measurements of spiritual growth (KNOWLEDGE, PERSPECTIVE, CONVICTION, SKILLS, CHARACTER).**

1. **KNOWLEDGE** of the word - Consider what people already know and what they need to know. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. **PERSPECTIVE**-Seeing something from a larger reference. Spiritual Perspective is seeing life from God's point of view (Related biblical words are understanding, wisdom, and discernment).

**PERSPECTIVE:**

a. **Causes us to love God more.** - In Ephesians 3: 18, the Apostle Paul prayed, "May you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is".  
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b. **Helps us resist temptation.** - Relative to sin, Proverbs 14: 12 states, "there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death". \_\_\_\_\_  
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- c. **Helps us handle trials**. - Romans 8: 28 "In all things, God works for the good of those who love him." (James 1: 3) "The testing of our faith develops perseverance". \_\_\_\_\_  
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- d. **Protects us from error**. - It is natural for one to error if not taught what is right and correct. Warren states that we desperately need **pastors and teachers** who will clearly teach "**God's perspective**" about work, money, pleasure, suffering, good, evil, **relationships**, and all the other key issues of life. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. **CONVICTION**-A combination of ones values, commitments, and motivations. Biblical convictions are essential for spiritual growth and maturity. A person without conviction is at the mercy of circumstances! \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. **SKILLS**-Ability to operate with relative ease and accuracy. \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. **CHARACTER**-That which defines and stimulates ones intentions, thoughts, and actions, regardless of the circumstances and regardless of who is watching.  
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**CONCLUSION** - Developing the character of Christ should be the Christian's most important goal and task; it is the only thing we'll take into eternity and it governs our actions as we do the work of the church. God is more concerned with our character than he is with our comfort. His plan is to perfect us; in doing so sometimes he allows all kinds of character-building circumstances such as conflict, disappointment, difficulty and temptation to touch our lives. Thus, in helping to "Build Up The Church," leaders, must assist members in developing and obtaining the knowledge, perspective, convictions, and skills, that will assist in building the Christ like character that is needed to handle life's situations and keep God's Church on solid ground.