

History & Polity of the Free Methodist Church – Online

Syllabus

Course # Acts12:24 1001

Free Methodist History and Polity Course

Course Description: The purpose of this course is to present in brief form the origin, development, beliefs, and practices of the Free Methodist Church, which has a rich heritage and history. The student will likely already be acquainted with much of the content of this study. S/he should give special attention to the matters with which he/she is not yet familiar. It is hoped he/she will enjoy reviewing the things already known, and evaluating his/her comprehension of what the church stands for, and why, and trying to find out something of the current mission of the Free Methodist Church.

Attributes of Outcomes-Based Ordination this course addresses

- Demonstrate a Wesleyan theological integration. They know and embrace the history, polity, Articles of Religion, and core values of the FMC. They articulate Wesleyan distinctives compellingly, and they understand and embrace a Wesleyan relational theology.

Expected Outcomes

- **Cognitive**
 - Understand and articulate the history of Methodism
 - Understand and articulate the history of Free Methodism, its early struggles and origins
 - Understand the origin of our doctrine and articles of Religion
 - Understand and articulate the general and special rules of Christian Conduct
 - Understand and articulate the organization of Christian fellowship and membership in the Free Methodist Church
 - Understand and articulate the organization of the official bodies of the Free Methodist Church
 - Understand the role of laity ministry
- **Behavioral**
 - Understand and be able to perform the rituals of the Free Methodist Church
- **Affective**
 - Understand and articulate the mission of the Free Methodist Church
 - Understand and agree with the critical distinctive of Wesleyan-Arminianism

General Description:

The course will help the student understand the origins, development, government and organization of the Free Methodist Church. These understandings will empower the student to lead renewal in the local church and to plant healthy reproducing churches & groups.

Course Texts:

Marston, Leslie R. From Age to Age A Living Witness. Light and Life Press. Winona Lake, IN 1960.

Roberts, B.T. Fishers of Men Many available on Amazon. Kindle version is \$0.99

Roberts, B.T. Ordaining Women Many available on Amazon. Kindle version is \$0.99

Roberts, B.T. Holiness Teachings Many available on Amazon. Kindle version is \$0.99

The Free Methodist Church of North America. The Book of Discipline. The Free Methodist Publishing House, Light and Life Communications, Indianapolis, IN. *Current Edition*.

The Free Methodist Church of North America. The Free Methodist Way. The Free Methodist Publishing House, Light and Life Communications, Indianapolis, IN; 2021

Grading Scale:

90-100 %- A

80-90 % -B

70-80 % - C

70 % and below – F

Assignments and grading:

1. Do all assigned readings and submit signed acknowledgement – 10%
2. Personal Reflection Assignments – Much of this course will focus on your personal interactions with BT Roberts and Free Methodist ideas. You will submit several 1-3 paragraph reflections throughout this course. The purpose of these assignments is to focus you on engaging the readings for your ministry in the 21st Century – 20%
3. Write a 3-4 page review and analysis of one of the three B.T. Roberts books which were read for class (if selecting Fishers of Men or Holiness Teachings, you will want to read the entire book for this assignment) – 30%
4. Write a 1-page reflection on the question, “Why am I a Free Methodist?” – 10%
5. Write a 4-5 page (Times New Roman, Double Spaced, 12pt Font) paper based on your reading in The Free Methodist Way. You will select one of the five “ways” and utilize the discussion questions & exercises from the book to guide your paper. You do not need to answer every question from the Discussion Guides, but they should form the majority of your paper. The final page should include your answer to the following question: How can I lead a congregation to walk deeper into (*your selected “way”*) – 20%

Assigned Readings before each Class Session:

1. Methodism is Born

- Book of Discipline, Articles of Religion pages 9-16
- Marson, Chapters 4-8

As you read this section, have these questions in mind:

- Did anything surprise you in the Book of Discipline Reading?
- Was there anything that you disagreed with or think should change in the Book of Discipline reading?
- How is John Wesley's Aldersgate experience still relevant to us in ministry today?
- How do you think Charles Wesley's hymns influenced early methodism and influenced early Free Methodism?
- Is it possible to live without sin? After conversion?

2. Methodism in Crisis

- Marston, Chapters 9-11 & Appendix A
- Roberts, Fishers of Men, Chapters 1-9

As you read this section, have these questions in mind:

- Why do you think pastors reduced their emphasis on Christian perfection?
- When is the last time you heard a sermon on Christian perfection/sanctification?
- How do you think early Methodists and Methodists in B.T. Roberts' day become so 'okay' with slavery?
- How did the concession to slavery lead to the prominence of pew rentals?
- What did you learn from Fishers of Men?
- Is there anything that you want to do better in preaching & ministry?

3. Free Methodism is Born

- Marston, Chapters 14 & 15
- Roberts, Ordaining Women
- Roberts, Holiness Teachings, Chapters 1-17

As you read this section, have these questions in mind:

- How did you react to the conventions/trials of B.T. and others?
- If this were to have occurred in 2019, with all of our technology and communication progress, would the movement have been stronger?
- Would the church have reformed and stayed unified?
- Would you have gone with the Free Methodists or stayed in the Methodist Episcopal Church and hoped for a unified action on slavery, pew tax, etc. – Why or why not?
- How did you react to Ordaining Women?
- Do you have any points of contention with Ordaining Women?
- What did you think about Holiness Teachings?

4. Free Methodism Lives On

- Marston, Chapters 19 & 20
- The Free Methodist Way (complete at least some of the discussion guide questions in each chapter)

As you read this section, have these questions in mind:

- Should membership at a Free Methodist Church be revoked for “unholy” or unrepentant sinful living?
- What stood out to you about the social justice stances of the early Free Methodist Church?
- Should we still be active in social justice?
- What social injustices should we be standing against?
- How am I living out the principles of the Free Methodist Way?