

# Belong

How was the Gratitude practice for you? What did you discover you were most grateful for?

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## Gratitude: Thank You Notes for Tour of Faith

Take a moment and remember something you are thankful for from Tour of Faith.

Hindu Temple: .....

Islamic Center: .....

Sikh Temple: .....

Greek Orthodox Church: .....

# Become

## What is sin?

The word “sin” comes from a Hebrew phrase that means “to miss the mark.” Like an archer shooting an arrow but failing to hit the target, often our actions fall short of the ideals God has for us. If the bullseye is what God wants for us, when we do things that hurt ourselves or others, it’s like we’re shooting our arrows into the ground or into the air behind the target.

Every human sins. We use our free will to hurt God, others, and ourselves. God gives each of us free will, which is the ability to make our own choices in our thoughts and actions. Free will is important because it allows us to truly love God on our own, not because we are forced to do so. Unfortunately, many people use their free will to do harm instead of good. The wrong things that people choose to do create a ripple effect that moves throughout the rest of the world.

## Scripture to read

Romans 3:23-24

*We all make mistakes. We all sin.  
But the key is to admit our mistakes  
and try to do better next time.*

### Prayer of Confession,

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

*From The Book of Common Prayer, Seabury Press, 1979*

## two kinds of sin

There are two kinds of sins in the world: Personal and Systemic.

**PERSONAL SINS** are the decisions we make that go against God's will for us and hurt those around us. It's the kind of mistakes we make that involve ourselves and those immediately connected to the situation.

**SYSTEMIC SINS** are sins we make as organizations, societies, countries, or any group of people. An obvious example would be slavery. A large group of people thought it was acceptable to own other human beings and treat them like objects. While personal sins were involved, the cultural acceptance that existed for hundreds of years would be considered a systemic sin. Even when we sin, God doesn't give up on us. God is heartbroken because God loves us so deeply. This is why the Story of God continues for thousands of years. God continues to invite us to be in relationship.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

—Romans 3:23-24

## What is Grace?

Grace is a gift of God. By definition it is not something we can earn or deserve through our own actions. God gives us grace because God loves us! Grace is God's presence to create, heal, forgive, reconcile and transform human hearts, communities and the entire creation.

*By grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit.*

-United Methodist Book of Discipline

John Wesley talked of the working of God's grace in a distinctive way. Keep in mind this is all one grace, but Methodists believe grace works in distinct ways in our lives. The different functions of grace are all part of the heart of God. We need them in different ways and at different times in our lives, but they are all there for us, all the time.

### **Prevenient Grace:**

This is the action of grace that comes before we have done anything, and is the reason we are able to respond to God's love. Wherever we go, God's grace is already there, and we couldn't out run it if we tried. God wants to be in relationship with us. God's prevenient grace is always there inviting us to say "yes" to God's love, even when we don't recognize it.

### **Justifying Grace:**

This is the action of grace that occurs when accept the invitation of Christ, decide to participate in God's grace, and receive forgiveness.

### **Sanctifying Grace:**

As we participate with what God is doing in our lives, we experience Sanctifying grace, a life-long walk with God through which we are being "perfected in love." Sanctifying grace is about growing in holiness. We learn to desire what God desires.

## John Wesley described Grace as a house

**Prevenient grace** as the porch on a house. It is where we prepare to enter the house. But, there is more to a house than the porch! We must enter the house .

**Justifying grace** is the doorway and the process of walking through it. The door is open with a welcome sign on it. We choose to walk through the door, turning toward a new future in God's love.

**Sanctifying grace** happens inside of the house as we explore and enjoy God's goodness and grow in holiness.  
<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/a-wesleyan-understanding-of-grace>

## What is Holiness?

For Wesley, the definition of holiness comes straight from the Bible: “Loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. It is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.” “For Wesley, there is no religion but social religion, no holiness, but social holiness. The communal forms of faith in the Wesleyan tradition not only promote personal growth, but they also equip and mobilize us for mission and service to the world.” -*United Methodist Book of Discipline*

## What are “Means of Grace”?

The means of grace are ways God works invisibly in disciples, hastening, strengthening; and confirming faith so that God’s grace pervades in and through disciples. As we look at the means of grace today, they can be divided into works of piety and the works of mercy.

## Works of Piety

**Individual Practices** - reading, meditating and studying the scriptures, prayer, fasting, regularly attending worship, healthy living, and sharing our faith with others

**Communal Practices** - regularly share in the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study

## Works of Mercy

**Individual Practices** - doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, and giving generously to the needs of others

**Communal Practices** - seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination (for instance Wesley challenged Methodists to end slavery), and addressing the needs of the poor  
<https://www.umc.org/en/content/the-wesleyan-means-of-grace>

What are some things you do that could be seen as motivated by grace? .....

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When was a time that you showed grace to someone else? How did they respond? .....

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## Spiritual Practice: The Wesley Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own but yours.  
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.  
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.  
Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,  
exalted for you or brought low for you.  
Let me be full, let me be empty.  
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.  
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.  
And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
you are mine and I am yours.  
So be it.  
And the covenant now made on earth,  
let it be ratified in heaven.  
Amen.

How do you think this prayer relates to grace? .....

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How might living this prayer impact your life? .....

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By grace you have been saved through faith,  
and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—  
not the result of works, so that no one may boast. *-Ephesians 2:8-9*

# Bless

How were you a blessing this week? .....

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How were you blessed? .....

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