

LIGHT
+ LIFE

Illuminate

Study Guide — july vol.151 no. 07



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Special Editorial— The Pendulum

To read the article, click fmchr.ch/Pendulum

Summary: Former Light + Life Editor Doug Newton — the co-director of the National Prayer Ministry of the Free Methodist Church – USA and the co-leader of the Spiritual Development track at General Conference 2019 — provides a timely call to prayer for the conference that will be held July 16–19.

1. Do you agree with Newton’s statement that “there are times we let the ‘good things’ (and often godly things) the world cares about create our agenda and methods rather than the Lord”? If so, what are some instances in which you’ve seen this occur?



2. What does it mean to be “doctrinally committed to the authority of Scripture” but “not be as dynamically committed to it”?



Further reading: Ephesians 4

Openers—

The Means Justify the End

To read the article, click fmchr.ch/Justify

Summary: Free Methodist Church – USA Communications Director and Light + Life Publisher Brett D. Heintzman introduces this issue that has an overall theme of “The Upside-Down Kingdom.” He asks readers to “relive your experiences with God that seemed upside down and backward at the time, but now make perfect sense to you.”

1. When have you experienced joy in the midst of trials?



2. Other than the examples given by the author, what are some other unexplainable events recorded in the Bible?



Further reading: Exodus 14:21–22, Joshua 10, Judges 6 and 7, Daniel 6, John 2:9–11, James 1

Bishops–

Exile: A Better Way

To read the article, click fmchr.ch/Better-Way

Summary: Bishop Matthew Thomas says that as Google Maps provide a better system of navigation than traditional maps, Jesus provides a better way than the law.

1. Can you obey God’s rules but still fail to act out of love?



2. How did Jesus break with the conventional understanding of God’s law without breaking the law?



3. Why do you think Christians fall into the trap of relying on their own strength instead of relying on the Holy Spirit?



Further reading: 1 Corinthians 12–13

Perspective— Good News From a Joyful God

To read the article, click fmchr.ch/Joyful-God

Summary: John-David VanValin, the lead pastor of First Free Methodist Church in Indianapolis, provides some Christmas in July as he looks at how good news entered the world through the birth of Jesus Christ.

1. Why do you think God chose shepherds to receive the good news instead of influential members of society?



2. Answer the question that VanValin poses: “Other than the gospel, is there anything that is truly good news for all people, from generation to generation, from culture to culture?”



3. What keeps many Christians from sharing “the good news of great joy for all people” with the people around them?



Further reading: Genesis 1, Matthew 7:11, Luke 2:10–11 and 11:13, Ephesians 2:13–22, Colossians 1:15–23

Perspective— Announcing the Upside-Down Kingdom

To read the article, click fmchr.ch/Upside-Down

Summary: Elisée Ouoba, an associate professor of biblical studies at Spring Arbor University and a member of the Free Methodist Church – USA Study Commission on Doctrine, shares how he initially resisted his call to ministry because it interfered with his plan to become a medical doctor, but he eventually surrendered. Ouoba also discusses how Jesus consistently modeled the upside-down kingdom He proclaimed.

1. Can you remember a time when you resisted God’s call?



2. Do our modern expectations of God reflect His “vision of healing for those who are hurting and love for our neighbors”?



3. Do we consider people to be Christians if they meet Jesus’ standard in Matthew 12:50 — “whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother”?



Further reading: Genesis 16, 17:17–22; Exodus 5:15–23; 1 Kings 19:1–18; Ezra 7:10, Jeremiah 20; Matthew 4, 11:1–6, 8:14–34, 16:13–23, 19:5–6; Mark 10:45; Luke 2:36–38, 7:37–38, 8:1–3, 24:13–35; Ephesians 5:25–6:9; 1 Peter 3:7, 5:1–4

Feature—

How to Unlock the Kingdom of Heaven in Your Heart

To read the article, click fmchr.ch/Unlock

Summary: Kristy Hinds, the assistant superintendent of ministry development for the Free Methodist Church in Southern California, discusses how “our stories are bridge builders. Every time we share our stories, we extend a bridge for someone to cross in search of the kingdom of heaven.”

1. Hinds shared difficult life experiences while writing her book, “Redeemed: The Power of a Single Story,” and then during the Uber ride described at the beginning of the article. What keeps some people from being vulnerable and discussing the hard times in their lives?



2. What would happen if more Christians “use our stories to create a multiplying ripple effect of love in the world”?



3. How can reading the stories of people in the Bible inspire us to live out our faith and share our stories?



4. Take time to pray individually or as a group for boldness in sharing your stories with people who would benefit from hearing them.



Further reading: Acts 4:23–31, Romans 12:1–2

Pop Theology— Who Are “the Least of These” and How Can We Help Them?

To read the article, click fmchr.ch/Least-Of-These

Summary: AJ French, the chief executive officer for Gift of Voice, provides a fresh perspective on Matthew 25:40, “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

1. Were you surprised that the two women described by French were actually the same woman? Why or why not?



2. Do local churches and Christian organizations give preferential treatment to rich people over people living in poverty? How should they balance treating everyone with respect while cultivating a donor base to help them cover their ministry efforts?



3. Who are the “least of these” in your community, and what are some ways you can help them?



Further reading: Deuteronomy 15:11, Matthew 25:31–46 and 26:11, Mark 14:7, John 12:8