

John Wesley – a Short Bio

John Wesley was a clear-thinking writer and preacher in England during the 1700's. There were countless thousands who owe their entrance into the Kingdom of God through his ministry. The Methodist movement grew up as a result of the tens-of-thousands throughout England who began meeting together in small churches, following Wesley's preaching and teaching. He had a great ability to gather groups of believers together. It is said that the great move of God that was raised up around him was the reason that England did not experience the chaos of revolution as France did in those days.

In my early days as a Christian, I came across several life-changing books by him. One was his Journal. Wow! As I read, there were so many stories of mobs seeking to stop him and destroy his work. It reminded me of the Acts of the Apostles. John was a brave man, with a sense of clear thinking and courageous writing and preaching. He was a down-to-earth man who had much love and compassion for the poor and needy. He was well known for preaching among the coal miners before their day would begin. Many of my ancestors were Methodists. My grandfather Paul Dibble was a minister in the organization. I didn't remain a Methodist when I was born again of the Spirit because in America the Methodist church has grown cold and lost the holy life it originally had during the Wesley days.

John and his brother Charles worked together in the rise of Methodism in the British Isles during the 18th century. They were among the ten children surviving infancy born to Samuel Wesley (1662 - 1735), Anglican rector of Epworth, Lincolnshire, and Susanna Annesley Wesley, daughter of Samuel Annesley, a dissenting minister.

John Wesley was born June 28, 1703, and died Mar. 2, 1791. He attended Oxford University. After a brief absence to help his father, John returned to Oxford to discover that his brother Charles had founded a Holy Club composed of young men interested in spiritual growth. John quickly became a leading participant of this group, which was dubbed the Methodists, a derogatory term for their attention to planning and consistency. His Oxford days introduced him not only to the rich tradition of classical literature and philosophy but also to spiritual classics like Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, and William Law's *Serious Call*.

In 1735 both Wesleys accompanied James Oglethorpe to the new colony of Georgia, where John's attempts to apply his then high-church views aroused hostility. Discouraged, in 1737 he returned to England. On the way across the Atlantic, he was rescued from this discouragement by the influence of the Moravian preacher Peter Bohler. At a small religious meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, on May 24, 1738, John Wesley had an experience in which his "heart was strangely warmed." After this spiritual conversion, which centered on the realization of salvation by faith in Christ alone, he devoted his life to evangelism. Beginning in 1739 he established Methodist societies throughout the country. He traveled and preached constantly, especially in the London-Bristol-Newcastle triangle, with frequent forays into Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. He encountered much opposition and persecution, which later subsided.

Late in life Wesley married Mary Vazeille, a widow. He continued a regimen of personal discipline and ordered living throughout his life. He died at 88, still preaching, and still traveling, As a young man John had left the Church of England because of so many things wrong with it, but had remained officially because of his conviction that it was not right to have divisions and splits in the church. In 1784, however, he had given the Methodist societies a legal constitution, and in the same year he ordained Thomas Coke for ministry in the United States; this action signaled an independent course for Methodism.