



Consecration Essay Questions

Genesis Conference of the Free Methodist Church

The purpose of these questions is to provide an opportunity for those pursuing the role of Consecrated Conference Deacon in the Genesis Conference to articulate their understanding of some of the basic tenets of Wesleyan theology and their implications for ministry. Using Scripture, Wesley's sermons, and the teachings of the Free Methodist Church, please respond as fully and clearly as possible in 200-400 words, or a couple of paragraphs, per question (1800-3600 words total).

We encourage you to work on these questions throughout your CMC journey.

1. The Nature of Scripture

You have just settled into your new pastoral appointment and receive an invitation to the monthly ecumenical clergy gathering that meets in your town. Thankful for the opportunity to meet other pastors, you decide to attend. Over lunch, a rather passionate discussion about the nature of Scripture ensues that reaches an awkward conclusion with the following exchange:

Susan: Well, the truth is that every religious tradition has its own scriptures or sacred texts to which they look for the teachings of their own faith. But all of them are essentially the same: they are all expressions of the basic human impulse to name and understand the divine. It doesn't ultimately matter which sacred texts one follows; what matters is whether one's interpretation and practices lead to the common good of all people.

Jim: Really?! Why would anyone ever want come to your church, Susan? In our church, we believe that the Holy Bible, comprised of books of the Old and New Testaments, was dictated by God to human authors who wrote precisely what God told them to write. The Bible is fully inerrant and is the only true Scripture. The so-called sacred texts of other religions contain no truth and are only an instrument of Satan to deceive to keep people from coming to living faith in Christ.

Juan: Our church teaches that the Scriptures include the books of the Old and New Testaments, but also include additional sacred writings often called the Apocrypha. All of these are means through which we learn God's truth. But, in addition to the Holy Scriptures, we firmly believe that God authoritatively guides the church through the passing on of Sacred Tradition.

At this point, your new colleagues turn to you and ask, so what does the Free Methodist Church teach about the nature of Scripture?

Write a response.

2. The Way of Salvation

Your new ministry is going well, and you are grateful to have several new people in your newcomers' class. During a session on the church's understanding of the biblical teaching about salvation, you ask the group to share any teaching they've had in the past or perspectives they may currently hold. Among the responses are the following:

Jamal: I was always taught that some people are chosen by God for salvation and some people are not. I think they called it the doctrine of election or predestination . . . or something like that. I have to admit that it never seemed very fair to me, but the people were genuinely loving and Christ-like, and truly had a beautiful sense of comfort from knowing in their hearts that they had been chosen by a sovereign God for eternal salvation.

Madeline: I'm really not so sure about the whole idea of salvation. I mean, what is it salvation for or from? What I really get when I come to church is encouragement and support to be a good person. It's so good to hear stories about the real-life struggles of people in the Bible and, especially, the example of Jesus who just amazes me every time I learn more about him. He really shows us how to live a good life that truly pleases God and helps others.

Natasha: For me, salvation was firmly connected to being a part of the church. In fact, as a child I was consistently taught that being a part of the church was an act of faith and trust that would ultimately lead to an eternity with God. I'm not sure whether I still believe this, but it does trouble me that so many branches of Christianity really seem only to emphasize an individual relationship with a personal Jesus with or without the church as Christ's Body on the earth.

Jaden: It seems like all I ever heard was legalism. It was either about a particular set of beliefs one had to hold or about a holy life a person had to achieve. Either way, the message was clear: if you failed, you were surely doomed to an eternity in hell, a place of fire and everlasting torment. None of it seemed very loving to me, so I just walked away from it all.

Write a response in which you seek to articulate a Wesleyan understanding of the doctrine of salvation and how it might bring clarity to the broad range of perspectives in your newcomers' class. Be sure that your response includes a discussion on the gospel, prevenient grace, justification, and sanctification, and what is involved in each component.

3. Holiness and Transformation:

A long-time church member regularly belittles the people around them. Once, when you heard them do it, you say, "Joe! That's unkind and unacceptable here." Joe looks at you and says, "Pastor, I've been mean for decades. Even God can't change me now." Assuming Joe allows you to give a theological response, how do you respond?

4. Multiplication:

(A reflection paper) Over your CMC journey, how has God shaped and transformed you?