



Sanctification Network

GUIDE

The Sanctification Network is a relational connection of local churches and leaders who are devoted to making more and maturing disciples of Jesus in Wesleyan heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Under the leadership of John Wesley, the early Methodist movement built a relational network of people from all segments of life. Their goal was to breathe new life into the Church and spread scriptural holiness across the land. This nimble, missional movement had grown to more than 115,000 people by the time of Wesley's passing.

The Sanctification Network - herein referred to as SN - is a contemporary movement of accountable churches and leaders which seeks to be connected to this Wesleyan heritage. This document serves as a foundational guide for this movement. The adaptive challenges of leading a movement of God in our post-Christian culture necessitate that we lead this movement, in the words of Robert Quinn, by humbly "building the bridge while we are walking on it." While our principles are not negotiable, our processes are always under continuous improvement.

The ongoing work of the SN is designed to add deep value to leaders and local churches who are hungry to participate in a move of God, which leads to more and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ. This movement will create a space within which like-minded leaders and churches will be given the opportunity to explore and learn from each other.

We envision a movement which transcends denominational structures - and other limitations - that artificially create barriers to a warm-hearted, winsome expression of Wesleyan disciple-making.

The SN will create a culture that both champions and challenges passionate spiritual leaders in their local churches. We will operate in a covenant community that lovingly offers the gift of accountability to leaders who are hungry to have a deeper impact. We will be accountable to each other in fidelity, to deeply rooted Wesleyan theology, key strategic models, and a loving covenantal community.

We are committed to living in loving accountability around developing passionate disciples, who are led by passionate spiritual leaders, who lead and grow passionate teams, who lead vital and multiplying churches.

The Sanctification Network intends to create and maintain healthy accountability for pastors and churches to make more and maturing disciples. It does not intend to encumber or complicate the work of the local church. The SN wants to help churches remain nimble and responsive in each unique ministry setting, thereby empowering each church to remain focused on the core disciple-making mission. This means some of the terms and language you find in this Guide Book are, in many cases, meant to be descriptive, not prescriptive. Churches do not have to adopt a certain language or process for making disciples. They do have to agree to the accountable commitments found in the last section of the Guide Book. For example, it is not essential that disciples are called "Passionate Spiritual Disciples". It is important, however, that there is language in your local church for making more and maturing disciples and metrics for measuring this.



DEFINITIONS

Passionate Spiritual Disciple (PSD):

An authentic follower of Jesus as Lord, filled and embodying the Spirit's fruit.

Traits of a PSD

- Identity is centered in Jesus as Lord of our life.
- Shaped and led by the Holy Spirit.
- In accountable relationships.
- Continually growing.
- Pursuing their calling.
- Helping others become disciples.

Vital Sign of a PSD

A PSD is in relationship where they are willing to be accountable to grow Spiritually, Relationally, and in their mission/calling.

Passionate Spiritual Leader (PSL):

Leadership is a gift that is received and a skill that is developed. A PSL is a disciple who is maturing as a leader, generating groups and systems in the local church to produce more disciples. Leaders submit to an approval process for leadership development in their local church. Leaders might lead small groups, prayer groups, or other disciple-making ministries in the local church. We expect local leaders to create a culture within which growth and discipleship are made possible and fostered.

Passionate Spiritual Team (PST):

PSTs and their leadership are marked by the following characteristics and commitments:

- Abide with Jesus in a genuine discipleship relationship.
- Personally, and purposefully develop other leaders.
- Express a non-anxious presence, embodying the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- Have a heart for discipleship multiplication, not merely addition.
- Show a genuine heart for people on the margins.
- Demonstrate a heart for cross-cultural disciple-making.
- Live simply to give generously through the tithe - and beyond - in their local church.
- Have a growing capacity for healthy relationships and influence, both inside and outside, the local church.

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Mission: We champion a movement of disciple-making in the Wesleyan way, for the renewal of the local church.

Vision: We envision a movement that exponentially generates passionate spiritual disciples and leaders, for the sake of spreading scriptural holiness for the loving transformation of our world.

Values:

- We value a hunger for the presence of God.
- We value the local church as the primary instrument for disciple-making in the body of Christ.
- We value a humble, surrendered attitude of continual sanctification, fostered by healthy accountability and oversight.
- We value faithful risk-taking for the sake of innovative spiritual experiments.



OUR THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR DISCIPLESHIP

The genius of the early Methodist movement was its alignment of their system for making more and maturing disciples, centered around their understanding of grace. What we know of life from the womb to the tomb is under grace, whether we recognize it or not. Every human being that ever was, is, or will be has lived under grace. Whether they live in and enjoy its benefits or not is a different discussion. The Bible teaches clearly that God's grace is available to all.

How do we experience grace in our journey from the womb to the tomb? Biblical scholars and theologians have tried to describe the way we experience God's grace in different seasons of our lives. Some call it the order of salvation. We experience this order of salvation through different seasons of our relationship with God.

The first season occurs before we become Christ-followers and is called prevenient grace. God, who made the world and everything in it, woos us into a relationship, just like a smitten lover. The second season, justifying or saving grace, is the moment or season when we come to recognize and claim Jesus' saving work for ourselves. The third season is sanctifying grace, the journey to align our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit, with the holiness of God in Christian community. The fourth and final season of grace is glorifying grace; this is our journey from abundant life now, to life eternal in the heavenly realm.

SYSTEM OF DISCIPLESHIP

The system for making more and maturing disciples follows this Wesleyan understanding of a developmental experience of God's grace. It begins with the stirrings of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a person who is pre-Christian, moves through the moment or season of conversion (justifying grace), to the lifelong experience of growing in Christlikeness (sanctifying grace), ultimately spending eternity with God (glorifying grace). One example of this grace-following strategy in a local church is:

- **Reach:** ministries that engage and invite unchurched people in our community to experience the love of Jesus through the body of Christ.
- **Connect:** ministries that help people connect to Jesus and our local church family.
- **Form:** ministries that help people embrace a growing and transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.
- **Send:** ministries that release God's people to make the realities of heaven the realities of earth.



BELIEFS WE HOLD IN COMMON WITH THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL

About God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. There is one God, eternally existing in three co-equal persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

About Humanity

Humans are both sacred and sinful. The Bible teaches we were created in the image of God. This means we are spiritual, moral, and relational beings. We are created by God to be in relationship with God, but we are marred by our disobedience toward God. The Bible calls this disobedience “sin.” Sin separates humans from the relationship with God we were intended to enjoy.

About Salvation through Jesus Christ

The only way to restore our relationship with God is by accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth and voluntarily paid for our sin by dying on the cross to take our punishment. He rose from the dead and will return to earth to rule forever. Accepting God’s saving grace—not our own human effort—offers the assurance of a Christ-filled eternity.

About the Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, draws sinners to Christ as well as equips and gifts believers for personal growth and service in the Church and in the world. The Church is the community of believers who have made Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior. The Church’s role is to bring people into a growing relationship with Jesus and serve the needs of a hurting world under the Holy Spirit’s leadership and power.

The Bible

The Bible is God’s Word to humanity. It was written by human authors under the supernatural inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth and the sole basis of our beliefs. It is the authoritative rule and guide for our lives.



BELIEFS WE HOLD IN COMMON WITH OUR WESLEYAN HERITAGE

Sacraments

As Christians in the Wesleyan tradition, we celebrate two sacraments: the Lord's Supper and baptism. Jesus, during his earthly ministry, emphasized both of these sacraments. Historically, most Christian traditions have affirmed the importance of both.

- **The Lord's Supper:** In communion, we remember the sacrifice of Jesus as He gave his life for us on the cross. We believe that the communion table is an open table and therefore all are invited to receive the grace of God regardless of their spiritual condition. It is a means of grace.
- **Baptism:** Baptism illustrates the burial and resurrection of Jesus and a Christian's new life in Christ. Baptism does not make you a Christian. As Wesleyan's, we practice both infant and believer's baptism.

Women in Ministry

We affirm that God calls both women and men into ministry and into the role of pastor. God equally gifts men and women for leadership and proclamation in the Church.

Gender

We believe God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as either male or female. Together, these two distinct sexes reflect the creative nature and image of God.

Human Sexuality

Scripture affirms that our sexuality is a gift from God and through God's sanctifying grace, belongs to God. We believe God designed the gift of sexuality to be expressed between a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage. For those persons outside of a covenant of holy matrimony, we affirm celibacy as a gift from God and seek to build intimate friendships with all persons within the body of Christ, regardless of orientation. Persons of homosexual orientation, no less than heterosexual persons, are people of sacred worth, created and loved by God.

Marriage

We affirm marriage as instituted by God, joining one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union for life, as affirmed in Scripture. God's gracious gift of human sexual expression is designed to be experienced in a loving covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. We believe God is honored through fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The founders of The Sanctification Network are pastors of churches who came together through a mutual “holy discontent” around disciple-making in the local church. The pre-pandemic metrics of attendance, budgets, buildings, and programs were all up and to the right.

However, the pandemic exposed the insufficiencies in our churches and revealed a need for a more robust, sustainable, and scalable model of disciple-making at the heart of the church.

We banded together, through a season of self-awareness and clarification of our current realities and insufficiencies. We confessed to each other that we were really good at filling rooms with people and had an abundance of excellent programs to offer, but...

- Were we fully and intentionally developing deeply maturing disciples of Jesus?
- Were we systematically creating passionate spiritual disciples who yearned to share their faith with friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors?
- Were we focusing on developing passionate spiritual leaders in a generative movement of disciple-making?
- Were we creating sustainable and replicable cultures wherein these leaders were growing passionate spiritual teams for multiplying a movement?

Based on this holy discontent, we banded together, seeking God’s direction for something new. We share a passion for a renewal of disciple-making in the Wesleyan tradition. We long to be a part of a new Wesleyan movement that recovers our focus on church planting and multiplication through a deep emphasis on disciple-making. We desire a hunger in the church for people to be “perfected in love” through the sanctifying grace of God.

We committed to gathering in a cohort for the intentional process of loving, learning, and leading together with a coach from Spiritual Leadership, Inc. (SLI). We hoped to model generative leadership that would become healthy, holy, and diverse. By the grace of God, we have been blessed to experience growth and vitality in our local churches, regardless of the malaise and decline experienced by many churches in North America. However, we all realized how much we needed to learn, grow, and change to make more and maturing disciples as we headed into an uncharted future for the local churches in our culture.

We have been guided by the two cornerstones of Wesleyan theology and practice: evangelism and discipleship. These cornerstones gave the Church its original heartbeat and fueled radical growth and impact. A return to Jesus’ self-proclaimed mission to seek and save the lost (evangelism) and his commission to teach baptized converts to obey all that he commanded (discipleship) will fan the flames of smoldering churches barely warmed by the embers of faith.

A church unified around reaching people for Christ and teaching them to obey Christ’s commands will recapture the zeal and dynamism of the early Wesleyan/Methodist movement. It will be evidenced by a relentless pursuit of those who do not yet know Jesus and a focused energy to grow passionate spiritual disciples.

The founding members of the SN have been hearing from a large chorus of voices who are longing for this renewal and revitalization of disciple-making in the Wesleyan way. However, before we launched anything external, we all sensed a need for each of us to become more mature, surrendered, and humble disciples ourselves. Therefore, this shared journey was called The Sanctification Project – we are individual projects of sanctification in God’s hands.



EXPANDING THE NETWORK

Since 2020, the Sanctification Project prayerfully discerned that the Holy Spirit was stirring in other church leaders a similar passion for making more and maturing disciples. Similarly, other church leaders began contacting us about joining our network movement. It was time to consider how the “Project” could evolve into a “Network.”

In the fall of 2022, at our bi-annual retreat, the following standards were established for church leaders and local churches that wanted to be a part of The Sanctification Network.

To be a part of our expanding network, The Connection requires that churches and senior leaders commit to the following:

1. The senior leader(s) will engage in an ongoing accountable small group that meets weekly (via Zoom) for two hours for loving, learning, and leading around making more and maturing disciples of Jesus. This group will also meet twice a year for a two day in-person retreat.
 - a. As a part of this group, the senior leader will have a coach who will help the senior leader in his or her accountability to making more and maturing disciples in the local church.
 - b. Personal development plans (PDPs) and ministry action plans (MAPs) will be shared for personal and professional growth and accountability.
 - c. It is expected that the senior leader will build one Operational Team capable of doing adaptive work focused on making more and maturing disciples in their context. They will replicate their learnings from being in the Sanctification Network with this team.
 - d. The senior leader will commit to an annual evaluation and growth plan administered by his or her coach, to be shared with his or her accountable small group and leadership board.
2. The senior leader(s) will attend any corporate gatherings of the SN, such as conferences that might gather for worship, vision casting, training, etc.
3. The local church will commit to pay membership dues for the coaching necessary for the ongoing accountable small group, as well as for other organizational expenses.
4. The local church will share best practices for discipleship, leadership, preaching, staff training, and anything that will help us grow as a catalyst for making more and maturing disciples in our network of churches.
5. The local church will commit to participate in church and ministry multiplication, as the Holy Spirit raises up new, passionate spiritual leaders. Our hope is that these leaders will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to build spiritual teams to birth new faith communities of all kinds.



RESOURCES:

Resources will be created for SN churches to use as guides or templates for adaptation in your unique settings. These are meant to equip and empower your ministry for healthy growth and accountability. You have the freedom to adapt these resources for application in your local church ministries.

This resource library will grow and evolve as the SN grows, with more pastors/leaders contributing best practices from their local churches.

