

colaborate

Methodist Confirmation

Leader Guide

Methodist History & Doctrine

Sampler

SPARK
HOUSE

colaborate

Leader Guide

The Colaborate Leader Guide gives you everything you need to lead a confirmation class—and then some. Created by experienced youth workers, the leader guide equips you to head into each session feeling informed, supported, and ready to walk with your students as they explore their questions about the Bible, Methodist history, and what it means to be a Christian.

Each session dives into the topic with deep scholarship so you can feel confident about your content. We also understand the realities of youth ministry—constant time constraints, last-minute volunteer changes, unpredictable head counts. The leader guide makes it easy for anyone—regardless of theological training, regardless of lead time—to facilitate a class. We provide the Bible verses, the theological background, and lots of creative ideas to guide leaders as they work through each lesson. Leaders truly can pick up the guide, spend a few minutes prepping, and start a class, just like that.

The leader guide features embedded images of the student handbook so you can walk through the lesson with your group in real time. It offers expanded discussion questions, additional activities, and tips for adapting the content to the size and dynamics of your group. Need to use up some time? We can help. Only two kids this week instead of ten? Colaborate has you covered.

Easy to use, easy to follow, and easy to hand off to a volunteer, the Colaborate Leader Guide helps you turn confirmation into a time of rich engagement with the Bible, Methodist doctrine, and—most importantly—your students.

LESSON: THE QUADRILATERAL

PROBLEM STATEMENT

I thought the Bible was supposed to be our guide in life, but it doesn't seem to address the problems I have.

TAKEAWAY

God reveals truth in different ways.

BIBLE PASSAGES

2 Timothy 3:10-17
Acts 2:41-47
Luke 4:14-24

KEY VERSE**2 Timothy 3:14-15**

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Bibles
- Handbooks
- DVD
- Pens
- Pencils
- Paper
- Scissors
- Butcher paper
- Uninflated latex balloons

Background Information

Part of our faith journey as Methodists is to reflect on what we call “our theological task.” Theology is our effort to consider God’s gracious action in our lives. It’s how we talk about and think about the mystery of God’s presence, peace, and power in the world. One of the unique ways Methodists undertake this task comes to us from both John Wesley and a twentieth-century Methodist scholar named Albert Outler. Outler called it the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

It’s important to note that John Wesley never used the term *Wesleyan Quadrilateral* in any of his writings. Instead, it was Outler who gave that name to a pattern he discovered in Wesley’s work. Outler found that Wesley commonly used four resources to arrive at reliable conclusions regarding issues of faith: Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.

For Wesley—and for Methodists today—the core of the Christian faith is revealed in Scripture. Wesley believed that while reason, tradition, and experience support and enliven our encounter with and understanding of Scripture, they can never be our focal point or trump the teachings of the Bible. Methodists, like other Christians, believe that through Scripture we meet the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, and discover the story of God and God’s people. Still, John Wesley was hesitant to say that our practical experience and knowledge are unimportant in our theological thinking. While the Bible is our primary guide in seeking God’s will, our efforts to make sense of Scripture always involve reason, tradition, and experience.

Wesley was a scholar and he applied his scholarship to his faith, reading books on Scripture, history, and theology to help him understand what he read in the Bible. In that same vein, our understanding of Scripture both informs and is informed by what we know about history, science, and culture. So we spend time learning about the context of Bible passages and using common sense and critical thinking to figure out how to understand and live out our faith.

We aren’t the first people to read the Bible or ask questions about what it means. That pushes us to look at our Christian tradition to help us make sense of what we read and learn. Understanding how Christians throughout history have understood the Bible and used it to inform their faith practices can help us in our faith formation as well. Sometimes we may even learn what *not* to do.

Finally, our personal and communal experience of God’s work in our lives helps us to interpret our faith as well. This fourth leg of the Quadrilateral can often take an outsized role in our theological work—for many people, it’s easier to trust our experience than any other part of the Quadrilateral. While our personal and communal experiences of the world and of God are vital to understanding and growing in our faith in Christ, they are only part of how we encounter God. We need all four parts of the Quadrilateral to help us learn and live our faith well.

What Students Need to Know . . .

- The Wesleyan Quadrilateral gives students tools to navigate, discern, and apply the truth and wisdom of the Bible. It’s not meant as a way to create an infallible argument or find loopholes in the Bible. Instead, students can see it as a way to enhance their reading of Scripture. Sometimes students believe they are supposed to read something in the Bible and instantly understand what it means. The Quadrilateral gives them a way to think critically about what they read and seek insight from others.
- The four elements of the Quadrilateral were never supposed to be equal. Wesley believed the Bible to be the primary source of God’s revelation. Tradition, experience, and reason reveal God to us in other ways and are meant to show us different ways of applying what the Bible teaches, but when they run counter to the Bible, the Bible is our ultimate authority. Outler himself regretted developing the Quadrilateral when he saw this flaw in it later in life. Consider offering other metaphors, like an unbalanced four-legged stool with one leg longer than the others, or wind chimes with Scripture as the main chime that strikes three smaller chimes, to help students get their heads around this idea of the supremacy of Scripture.

- We can easily skew the Quadrilateral to reinforce the beliefs we already have rather than using it to help us think theologically about the issues in front of us. Because of that, two people can use the Quadrilateral rigorously when studying the same topic and end up with very different conclusions. So it’s important to remember that the Quadrilateral doesn’t tell us what to do. It offers us a process for thinking through the questions a life of faith brings our way. But that process is only as effective as our willingness to have our minds changed. If we are really open to being challenged and formed by the Holy Spirit, then we might find ourselves with a new understanding of God.

Where They Might Struggle . . .

- Students might not have thought a whole lot about the authority of Scripture or what to make of the Bible. No matter where they are on this, encourage students to think of Scripture as the witness of God’s people. Like people throughout history, we rely on the testimony of others to inform our thinking today. The Bible is the story of our tradition and our collective experience as God’s people. We give the Bible authority in our lives because we trust that it’s the God-breathed story of God’s work in the lives of God’s people.
- Students who come from families that don’t practice a faith might feel like their faith formation is limited to their time in confirmation class. Encourage students to talk with their family members about the various questions that come up in confirmation to see what they think about those issues. Students might find that wisdom isn’t limited to people they find inside the walls of the church.
- Students this age can be prone to legalism. They may be fairly structured in their ideas about right and wrong and not know how to make room for nuance. The Quadrilateral can easily become a formula for being a jerk unless we help students see it as a way of seeking God and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Thinking theologically isn’t about making new rules or enforcing old ones. It’s about following God as we make our way in the world.

About the Video . . .

We zoom in on a familiar scene: two siblings fighting. Did Donnie steal Vanessa’s gum? Is Vanessa being too harsh on her brother? Where can these two turn for help? Just when all hope seems lost, it’s Scripture Man to the rescue! But what happens when Scripture Man’s counsel is not as clear or, um, non-violent as they’d hoped? This video introduces students to the four parts of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and gets them thinking about the tools we use to make sense of the Bible.

Lesson Notes . . .



John Wesley and Albert Outler made quite the team. Wesley provided the words and inspiration, and Outler—hundreds of years later—cobbled them together into a tool United Methodists could use to think theologically. Start with Scripture (of course) and make your way through the Quadrilateral, helping your students see how this approach helps us learn more about God.

What other books have been helpful to you in your life? In your faith? Do you believe God still inspires people to write or speak to others? Why or why not?

Who would you add to the center graphic? Think of someone who has helped you grow in faith. How have they done that?

The Quadrilateral isn't primarily about making decisions; it's about drawing closer to God by seeking God's will and wisdom. What do the pieces of the Quadrilateral tell you about the ways God is present in our lives?

Have No Fear... The Quadrilateral Is Here!
It's easy as 1, 2, 3... 4!

SCRIPTURE!
When facing a big question of faith, John Wesley believed that we have to start with Scripture, the inspired Word of God. Look up 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Near the Bible, write down some of the ways the writer of this letter suggests we use the Bible. Now talk with a partner about a time when you've used the Bible in one of these ways. If you never have, how would you go about doing that?

EXPERIENCE!
God shows us truth in our daily lives, which is why Wesley believed we ought to use our own experiences to help us learn about our faith. The way you experience God can help you make sense of the Bible. Just be careful! We also need to consider the experiences of other people. If your experience has taught you that stealing someone's phone is the best way to get a phone, you might be thinking about this quite right. For Wesley, experience is like conducting an experiment, a way to prove and demonstrate the reality of God's grace at work in us. Our own experiences, filtered through the Bible and tradition and reason, help us become more like Jesus. In the space to the left, draw an image that reminds you of an experience in your life that taught you something about God or your faith.

REASON!
Wesley believed that God wants us to use our brains and that our beliefs about God should make sense with all the other things we know to be true. We can use Scripture, tradition, and experience to figure out what's true, but sometimes they don't quite fit together. That's when we put our brains to work. You might have to think about a question for days, or weeks, or even years before you find an answer that works. What's a question you had when you were younger but knew the answer to now? Write it near the graduation cap.

Read Romans 5:1-5 together. How can painful experiences be a helpful part of the Quadrilateral? When have you seen someone's faith grow stronger as the result of a difficult experience?

Have students share their responses to this prompt. This conversation can help you avoid a "let's rip on the church" vibe as you talk about the role of tradition.

TRADITION!
When we face big questions in life, especially about our faith, it's helpful to know that we're probably not the first people to have those questions. John Wesley believed we should consider what church leaders and Christian thinkers have had to say about any issue we're facing. Their ideas can help guide our thinking too. Need some examples?
• Athanasius wondered if Jesus is really God.
• St. Francis of Assisi believed God loves animals too.
• Immanuel asked whether we need the Old Testament.
• Mother Teresa was concerned that her faith wasn't strong enough.
What are some songs, prayers, or worship traditions that impact your faith? When have you looked to members of your church or family to help you understand more about God? Write your thoughts by the bishop's staff.

EVERY SUPERHERO NEEDS A SPECIAL POWER. JOHN WESLEY BELIEVED THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US THE POWER TO USE THE FOUR RESOURCES THAT WOULD BECOME THE QUADRILATERAL AND FIND THE ANSWERS WE NEED. WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT? IN THE SPACE AROUND JOHN AND ALBERT, DRAW A PICTURE THAT SYMBOLIZES THE HOLY SPIRIT. (HINT: SEE GALATIANS 5:22-23.)

REASON!
Wesley believed that God wants us to use our brains and that our beliefs about God should make sense with all the other things we know to be true. We can use Scripture, tradition, and experience to figure out what's true, but sometimes they don't quite fit together. That's when we put our brains to work. You might have to think about a question for days, or weeks, or even years before you find an answer that works. What's a question you had when you were younger but knew the answer to now? Write it near the graduation cap.

Some people use the ugly parts of church history—wars, persecution, the Crusades—as a reason not to believe in God. Why do you think Wesley was careful to include Scripture and reason along with church history and tradition in his method of thinking theologically? What can these ugly parts of our history teach us about the way we live out our faith today?

Think about the differences between some popular superheroes: Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Spider-Man. Do they all have superpowers? How did they get them? What are some of the different ways the Holy Spirit equips us to know more about God?

What's something in our faith tradition that doesn't make sense to you? What kind of resources could help you explore that problem?

Want More?

- Have students do topic searches in a Bible concordance by flipping through to see what topics the Bible covers. What are they surprised to find? Who can find the strangest topic? What's a topic they wish they could find? Are there any topics that only show up in the Old Testament? What about the New Testament?
- If your students seem to have a good understanding of the Quadrilateral, give them a chance to play with theological geometry! Using butcher paper, have students cut out a bunch of shapes with multiple sides and angles. Then have them grab a few and come up with a Wesleyan Quintilateral or Octolateral or whatever. What sides—experiences or resources that help them know more about God—would they add to the original Quadrilateral? Would they replace any? Would Wesley be a group-think kind of guy?
- Split into four groups and have each group represent one part of the Quadrilateral. Then present a problem to the whole group and give the groups ten minutes or so to come up with their solutions using only their assigned part of the Quadrilateral. When all the groups are finished, ask each group to talk about the challenges of being limited to one aspect of the Quadrilateral.

- The movie *October Sky* is about seeking wisdom and finding your way in the midst of conflicting opinions. Consider hosting a movie night for students, parents, and mentors.

Mentor Notes

- Have mentors talk about times they've wrestled with Scripture and how they reconcile those issues with their faith. It's important for students to see that adults have similar concerns or issues with faith.
- Ask student/mentor pairs to look back in your church's history to find a time when the congregation had to make a difficult decision or work through a problem. What prompted this situation? What was their process for figuring out what to do? What was the result? How did people feel about it? They can find their information by conducting interviews, reading old church records, looking at old local newspapers, or using other sleuthing techniques. Ask each pair to bring their findings to the next class.

LEADER TIP

Follow the Steps.

As you check in with students, affirm the questions they're asking here, even if the solutions seem obvious to you. If students seem stuck with their problem, encourage them to take their time. This is a great activity for students to take home and work through with their families. You could also invite the pastor to join you and have students ask tough questions to see what kind of advice the pastor has.

Learning to think theologically is one of the key developmental tasks of adolescent faith formation. Students might be all over the maturity map as they work through this activity, so encourage them to stick with it and come up with ideas that fit their situations.

Calling on the Quadrilateral!
We all have big questions in our faith, so let's practice using the Quadrilateral to think theologically!

Option 1: Follow the Steps
Think of a decision you're trying to make, then work through the Quadrilateral on your way to a (possible) answer. If you need more time, this is a great activity to practice at home!

Scripture: What does the Bible have to say about this problem? Think in general terms. The Bible might not say anything about how to tell your parents about a failing grade, but it does have a lot to say about honoring your parents and being honest. Find a Bible with an index at the back to help you find passages that might offer insights.

Tradition: What advice do you think a wise and mature member of the church would give you about this decision?

Experience: What life events could help you think through this decision? How do they fit with what the Bible is saying?

Reason: What else do you know that could factor into your decision?

Option 2: Super-Team . . . Assemble!
Supplies: butcher paper, markers, tape, scissors
Every hero needs a costume!

- In a group of two to four super-friends, pick one of your questions (or a friend's question) from the first page of this lesson.
- Using butcher paper and tape, work with your group to make four articles of clothing, each representing one part of the Quadrilateral.
- Bring out your artistic side, and decorate the costume pieces using markers.
- Time for a superhero show-off! Share your creations with the class, and explain why each piece represents the given part of the Quadrilateral.

Found an answer? Great! Not yet? Don't worry! Give it some time. Remember, some answers take a long time to find.

1. Think 2. Share 3. Discuss

What part of the Quadrilateral do you tend to use most? Why?

Don't let the face masks fool you. This activity can make deep theological connections as students translate big concepts into visual icons.

What part of the Quadrilateral do you tend to use most? Why?

LEADER TIP

Super-Team . . . Assemble!

For large groups: Have a fashion show by creating a catwalk and choosing music related to heroes or other inspirational music. For small groups: Consider having a student or two share their costume and what it means.

Methodist History & Doctrine

LESSON TITLE	PROBLEM STATEMENT	KEY VERSE
JOHN WESLEY: PART 1	I don't know much about John Wesley, and I'm not sure why I should care.	1 Samuel 3:7
JOHN WESLEY: PART 2	I feel like faith is just something between God and me.	1 John 4:21
THE GROWTH OF METHODISM	I thought John Wesley started all of the Methodist churches in the United States.	Ecclesiastes 4:12
THE QUADRILATERAL	I thought the Bible was supposed to be our guide in life, but it doesn't seem to address the problems I have.	2 Timothy 3:14-15
GRACE	I thought grace was just another word for forgiveness.	Philippians 2:13
PERFECTION	God says I can be perfect, but I don't see that happening.	Matthew 5:48
PRAYER	I'm not sure why or how to pray.	1 Samuel 2:1
FREE WILL AND THE OMnipRESENCE OF GOD	If God is involved in everything, does that mean God controls everything?	Psalms 139:1-2
SALVATION	I think salvation is just about going to heaven.	Ephesians 2:8-9
HOLY COMMUNION	Body? Blood? I don't understand what's happening during communion.	Luke 22:19-20
WORSHIP/SERVICE	I don't know why I need to attend worship.	Isaiah 25:1
THE GENERAL RULES	There are already a bunch of rules in the Bible. I don't know why Wesley needed to create more.	1 Corinthians 10:23-24
THE METHODIST CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD	I didn't know there were other Methodists around the world.	Philippians 1:6
BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION	I don't remember my baptism—maybe I should do it again.	John 15:16
COVENANT MEMBERSHIP VOWS	Of course I'm going to get confirmed, now that I'm done with class.	1 Timothy 4:12

Old Testament

LESSON TITLE	KEY VERSE
CANON	2 Timothy 3:16
THE HEBREW BIBLE	Deuteronomy 6:6
GENESIS	Genesis 1:27
EXODUS	Exodus 33:17
LAW	Deuteronomy 5:2
JUDGES	Judges 6:24
RUTH	Ruth 1:16
KINGS	1 Samuel 8:7
BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY	Jeremiah 25:7
PROPHETS	Deuteronomy 18:22
PSALMS	Psalms 1:2
WISDOM	Proverbs 2:6
JOB	Job 1:22
ESTHER	Esther 4:14
THE RISE OF ROME	Ezra 1:3

New Testament

LESSON TITLE	KEY VERSE
MAPS	Acts 14:27
THE NEW TESTAMENT	John 12:50
JESUS	Philippians 2:5-7
MATTHEW	Matthew 1:22-23
MARK	Mark 1:15
LUKE	Luke 2:49
JOHN	John 14:10
ACTS	Acts 1:8
PAUL AND THE EARLY CHURCH	Acts 9:15
PAUL'S THEOLOGY	1 Thessalonians 1:8
ROMANS	Romans 1:16-17
1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS	2 Corinthians 5:17
GALATIANS	Galatians 1:6
LETTERS	1 Timothy 1:5
REVELATION	Revelation 21:3-4

Into the World

What resources would help you think theologically this week?

