A Perfect Love
Week #3
Worship Helps

Key Verse

“You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.”

— 1 Corinthians 12:27 (CEB)

Suggested Scripture for Worship


Key Idea

“Deeply held disagreements become the occasion to exercise love by openness to learning from one another” (132).

Calls to Worship

Welcome/Spoken Word Introduction

Welcome to worship as we continue with our series A Perfect Love. These last weeks, in worship and in small groups, we’ve been focusing on a foundational teaching of John Wesley – one that distinguished him and the people called Methodist. Wesley believed that Scripture taught that as Christians we grow with grace upon grace, being transformed more and more into the full likeness of Christ, journeying on to perfection, which is the complete and abiding love of God and neighbor as ourselves.

With Wesley’s teaching and their regular practice of the means of grace (spiritual disciplines), Methodists in 18th century England found their lives transformed. And I can understand that, because I’ve found our study and worship these last weeks to be transformational too!
But this journey to perfection does not make us flawless and it is not a cure all for our troubles. So Wesley concludes his plain account of Christian perfection by giving advice to those who are so drawn to the doctrine that they yearn to open their lives to this love. He advises to beware of pride and sins of omission and of desiring anything but God, and to be excellent in all things. And he advises them regarding the separation that can be experienced in families, communities, the nation, even within ourselves and within the church. We long to overcome the tension and the heartache that come from division. And this, it turns out, is only another opportunity to grow in perfect love.

Let us join our hearts as we worship God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three-in-one and one-in-three, perfect love and perfect unity.

CALL TO WORSHIP#1 (RESPONSIVE)

*Leader:* Maker, in whom we live, in whom we are and move,

*People:* Receive the glory, power and praise for your creating love.

*Leader:* Incarnate Deity, who ransomed all below,

*People:* We give in thanks our lives to you for your redeeming grace.

*Leader:* Spirit of Holiness, let all your saints adore,

*People:* Your sacred energy we bless, your heart renewing power.

*Leader:* Eternal, Triune God, with all the hosts above,

*People:* Let all on earth below receive and dwell upon your love. *(UMH #88, adapted)*

Prayers, Litanies, etc.

OPENING PRAYER

*Our heavenly Father,*

we your humble children invoke your blessing on us.

*We adore you,* whose name is love,

whose nature is compassion, whose presence is joy,

whose Word is truth, whose Spirit is goodness,

whose holiness is beauty, whose will is peace,

whose service is perfect freedom,

and in knowledge of whom stands our eternal life.

*Unto you be all honor and all glory,*

through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* *(UM Book of Worship #462)*
PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen. (UM Hymnal, p. 6)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the way of peace. Come into the brokenness of our lives and our land with your healing love.
Help us to be willing to bow before you in true repentance, and to bow to one another in real forgiveness. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, melt our hard hearts and consume the pride and prejudice which separates us. Fill us, O Lord, with your perfect love, which casts out our fear, and binds us together in that unity which you share with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen. (UM Book of Worship #482)

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Almighty God, giver of every good and perfect gift, teach us to render to you all that we have and all that we are, that we may praise you, not with our lips only, but with our whole lives, turning the duties, the sorrows, and the joys of all our days into a living sacrifice to you; through our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (UM Book of Worship #555)

SENDING FORTH/BENEDICTION

May God’s perfect love uplift you. May God’s perfect love transform you. May God’s perfect love surround you through the challenges ahead. May God’s perfect love convince you, in every situation, to love. Go now to love others, even as Christ loves you. (Worship & Song #176 adapted)
Artistic Elements

HYMNS (UM HYMNAL)

Note: hymn numbers followed by “(W)” are written by Charles Wesley

88 (W) – Maker, in Whom We Live
345 – Take Time to be Holy
413 (W) – A Charge to Keep I Have
438 (W) – Forth in Thy Name, O Lord
465 – Holy Spirit, Truth Divine
530 – Are Ye Able
553 (W) – And Are We Yet Alive
561 (W) – Jesus, United By Thy Grace