

## EPISTLE 2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-18

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture:

“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak,

<sup>14</sup>because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus

will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring you into Christ’s presence.

<sup>15</sup>Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people,

may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

<sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

<sup>17</sup>For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,

<sup>18</sup>because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

## \*GOSPEL MARK 3:20-35

...and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat.

<sup>21</sup>When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” <sup>22</sup>The scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.”

<sup>23</sup>He called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan?

<sup>24</sup>If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

<sup>25</sup>And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

<sup>26</sup>And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come.

<sup>27</sup>But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first binding the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

<sup>28</sup>“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter;

<sup>29</sup>but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”—<sup>30</sup>for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

<sup>31</sup>Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him.

<sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.”

<sup>33</sup>And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?”

<sup>34</sup>And looking at those who sat around him, he said,

**“Here are my mother and my brothers!**

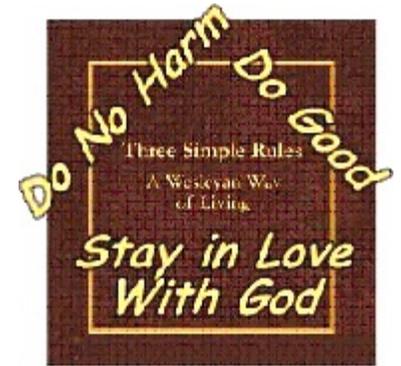
**<sup>35</sup>Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”**

*From the Camp Song “Unconditional Love:”* Don’t try to harm,  
or bring somebody down.

We all make mistakes, God’s love will bring us ‘round!  
Hasten just to pray; God’s way will win the day,  
With non-reactive Unconditional Love

Wesley’s 3 General Rules:

**Do no Harm  
Do Good  
Stay in Love with  
God**



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“Christianity is not complicated. But it is really hard.” I don’t know who said that first, but it is true. It is hard to put what we know into motion.

John Wesley, co-founder of the Methodist movement, knew the movement was growing so fast that he could not meet with each group of people. Most did not have a lot of knowledge of the details of the Christian faith. They craved hearing sermons about the unconditional love of God.

He needed something to help people who knew very little—as well as those who knew quite a bit about the faith—to talk about their spiritual growth together, in groups. In 1742, 4 years after his brother’s and his breakthrough Aldersgate moments, John came up with “General Rules.”

It was brilliant.

The three rules were so simple that a beginner could be motivated by them and they were also so open-ended that they could challenge those who happened to have quite a bit of knowledge of the faith:

**Do no Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God.**

Originally the last one was “attend upon the ordinances of God”—or find ways to be where God is working. Be where others are working to grow in faith.

We're getting ahead of ourselves. The first rule is: "Do no harm." Sounds easy. "I can do that. I can make sure I don't hurt anyone." Not so fast. The longer you work with "Do not Harm" the more profound that rule becomes. Even little things can take a toll. Saying about something someone else's efforts: "I sure wouldn't have done it that way," *can* do harm, can't it! It subtly calls into question others' skills and perhaps even motives.

If you start thinking about Sins of Omission we can realize there are many ways to do harm. During the Communion Prayer last Sunday at Holy Child Church, retired pastor Rev. Lynn leaned over and she said to me -

"It is at this moment every week all my sins of omission come to me." That's when God's forgiveness gets real. The people who lead Harvard's Kennedy School seminars on Adaptive Change really pushed me on "Do no harm." Said Alex Grashow, "being nice is not necessarily 'doing no harm.' At times if we don't stop someone else from harming, or if we don't get something on track, we can do a lot of harm while thinking we are nice." So find a way that does no harm to stop self or someone else from doing harm.

Do good—that is easier, right! Yes, at first. There's a great energy that comes from doing good. It gets pretty thin though, if we think it is our power that propels us to do good. Remember that doing good is not a job assignment. It is an invitation to participate in the Divine Energies of God.

Stay in Love with God – Wesley listed all sorts of ways—Communion, public worship (because you are visible in your commitment to Christ), Bible study, personal prayer, giving generously, fasting—they all open up channels to feel, receive, and share God's unconditional Love.

The General Rules are a 3-step way to live out the truth of Paul's words:

<sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day...

<sup>18</sup>so we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

Even Jesus struggled with do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God! His words guide us. Facing opposition from religious leaders, his own family wanted him call it quits:

<sup>22</sup>Scribes... said, "He has Beelzebul: by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons."  
<sup>23</sup>He called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan...

... <sup>25</sup>And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand...

<sup>27</sup>But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first binding the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

**Doing no Harm. Doing Good. Staying in Love with God** binds the "strong man." It stops evil and opens up room for good.  
We can rob evil !

Your assignment: Focus on what it means to **Do no Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God.** Here's how: Think for a moment: "How can I "**do no harm**" in this situation? When you **do something good**, and you will! – remind yourself you are not just being nice, you are doing what you do as an extension of God's energy!

What can I do that'll help me "**stay in love with God?**"  
All relationships take work!

My friend Jon, whom I helped ordain last weekend, when he was an intern here in Nebraska, every now and then I'd get a call. Jon would say (with so much joy in his voice that it was hard to believe it was true) "I've had a rough day. I need to watch *Touched by an Angel* with a friend." "Sure. I can reschedule my stuff tonight for tomorrow." "I'll be there in five minutes." He must have carried the DVDs in his trunk.

We'd pop a DVD in. That show is so sweet. It talks about God in a way that we needed to hear: *God loves you very much. God knows you. God knows you are not perfect. God forgives you. God loves you.* The angels had real struggles.

Della Reese as the angel Tess was outgoing. She'd break into song at the drop of a hat. Angel Monica was an internal processor. Both – like us – struggled with their “assignments.” It was hard even for them to Do no Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God.

Within moments I'd be crying. “You see why I like this show?” he'd ask. Absolutely. It always seemed like he'd choose episodes I needed to see!

Last Saturday, the morning of the day Jon was ordained, after his mom made French Toast for all of us camped out at his house, Jon announced, “Okay, for spiritual formation this morning of my ordination day, I want to watch *Touched by an Angel*. Will you watch it with me? I have 3 episodes.” He cheated. The last episode comes in two parts. So it was actually a 4-hour *Touched by an Angel* marathon! It was *wonderful*.

That two-hour episode us the show's finale. I never saw it before. It's a wonderful story. Monica ends up in a community that has given up on itself. People hang on to things that remind them of loved ones who are gone.

Everyone blames everyone else for the horrible things that happened. A young stranger is in town. Before long everyone blames him for their problems. Monica comes to his aid. On down the road, Tess helps Monica see who it was she helped. Monica realizes he was Jesus. She tells him how sorry she is that she did not know who he was.

He says something I'll always remember... “It's all right that you did not recognize me. If you had known it was me you would have done anything for me. What you did you did for a stranger. When you did what you did you helped a whole community come back to life. You were working with me without even knowing it. Well done, good and faithful servant!

**Do no Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God.**