

THE TAKE HOME

St. Paul UMC | 2000 Douglass Blvd., Louisville, KY 40205 | www.stpaulchurchky.org

Embrace Love

- *Healing, not hurting:* When you commit to the way of a disciple of Jesus, you live to bring healing instead of hurt; wholeness instead of division.”
- *Transform conflict:* Conflict is inevitable, combat is optional. When everyone agrees to do no harm in conflict, it transforms the conflict. It means no gossip, no disbaring others, or manipulating fact.
- *Overcoming fear:* When we are determined to do no harm to others, we begin to lose our fear of one another. We can see and hear one another more clearly.

**Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.**

– Romans 12:21

Some background on “Three Simple Rules”

Bishop Rueben Job wrote a book reflection on John Wesley’s “General Rules.” Early in the Methodist movement John Wesley offered them as guidance.

“John Wesley knew how difficult it would be for his followers, particularly those recently converted, to live a holy life. To this end, he created structures and practices that would help foster faithful living in the members of the Methodist Societies. In 1743 he outlined these practices in the ‘General Rules,’ which functioned as a sort of contract by which group members held one another accountable.” (www.umc.org).

“These rules are organized into these three basic categories: **Do no harm**, ‘avoiding evil of all kinds’; **Do good**, ‘of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all;’ Practice ‘the ordinances of God,’ (**Stay in Love with God**) or engage in individual and communal spiritual practices such as prayer, Bible reading, worship and the Lord’s Supper.” (www.umc.org).

So what is a “society?” Well in the beginning there were three different groups which were organized to help Christians deepen their walk with God. The groups were not intended to replace church attendance, but in addition to it.

“The Society Meeting was the largest of the three groups. Methodists would gather each week for instruction and preaching from John Wesley, Francis Asbury, or another early leader. The Class Meeting was a small group of about a dozen people who shared life together. At their weekly meetings each member of the Class answered the question, “How is it with your soul?” Attendance in a Class was mandatory for admittance to a Society meeting. The Band Meeting was a very small group of approximately 5 people who would confess their sins and struggles together. Members would talk specifically about their temptations, successes, and failures. Not every Methodist was part of a Band.” (www.umc.org)

Methodism began with small groups coming together to ask a simple question, “How’s your spiritual life?” We still believe that the best way to follow Jesus is to be part of a community of believers who encourage one another to live more like Jesus. I want to offer these Daily reflections for this week.

Prayer to Do No Harm

Gracious God,

Today, I want my life to bless others. Help me to do no harm with my words or actions. My prayer is that no one because of me, will have:

...more hate and less love...
more sadness and less joy,

...more fear and less hope,

...more sickness and less health,

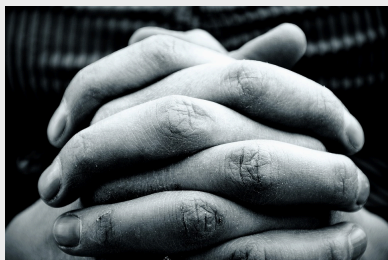
...or experience more chaos and less of Your peace.

Let part of my worship this day be to pay attention to the smallest and most casual encounters, so that life will be a little bit better and brighter to all I meet.

May they see YOU in me.
May they see patience and kindness. May they see kindness and compassion.

Without saying a word, may my actions and attitudes speak of my faith. When words are needed, may I offer the hope that is in you.

Amen



Monday: *“If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.”* (Galatians 5:15) Bishop Job writes, *“The first simple rule is “Do no harm.” It is not complicated. Even a child can understand what it means, and it is applicable to everyone at every stage of life.”*

What did you learn as a child that has still served you well as you have grown?

Tuesday: The apostle Paul tells us how to use our words for the benefit of others. He encourages us: *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ... Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:29, 31-32).

Recall a time when someone was especially kind to you with their words. How can you pass that on today?

Wednesday: Bishop Job writes on Rule #1, *“Do no harm,” “...if I am to do no harm, I can no longer gossip about the conflict. I can no longer speak disparagingly about those involved in the conflict. I can no longer manipulate the facts of the conflict. I can no longer diminish those who do not agree with me and must honor each as a child of God.”*

We are all created in the image of God. When we remember that the light of God is each person that we meet today it changes how we relate to them. **Include in your prayers those who you find hardest to love.**

Thursday: *“A second reason why this step is not taken may be that we have bound ourselves to a certain ideology or theology rather than binding ourselves to Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord of all.”* (Job, 24)

Someone once said, “It is better to be loving than to be right.” When the woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus the crowd demanded that she be stoned. According to the law it was “right”, but Jesus showed them a path to be loving. Let’s repent of those times when we get carried away with what we feel is “right” and lose sight of Jesus as our Lord.

Friday: Bishop Job asks, “Is it possible to live in this complex and violent world without doing harm?” (Job, 27). What a great question. The question illustrates that the path toward a full life is not an easy one. That is why we have each other and Jesus as our guide. We can’t make it alone.

Saturday: According to Bishop Job, “To do no harm means that I will be on guard so that all my actions and even my silence will not add injury to another of God’s children or to any part of God’s creation”. How will you help someone today?