



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

2084 Wilson Pike · Franklin, TN 37067 · 615.794.2665
Pastor Dennis Meaker: 615.794.2665 · djmeaker@gmail.com



March 12, 2014

Wesleyan (United Methodist) Theology Three Simple Rules

We're looking at our core Methodist beliefs. Those beliefs about Christian life and theology derived from our heritage as Methodists. This week I want to talk about the General Rules for living as handed down from Wesley's day. These rules address the question, "How do I live my life as a Christian?"

Knowing something intellectually and understanding what it means for your life are two different things. Understanding something often comes when we have to express our beliefs to others. For example, I conducted bible studies for a number of years at the Community Correctional Facility in Nashville. This is the jail run by the Davidson County Sheriff. The prisoner mix is everything from fathers who are behind on child support to people awaiting trial or sentencing on more serious crimes. At one point early on, a prisoner asked me how he was supposed to live by all this love your neighbor stuff in the prison pod. Even inside a prison, violence breaks out on a regular basis. This prisoner stated that he both hated and feared some of his pod mates.

Without thinking a lot about it, I told him that Christian love didn't have a thing to do with affection. You don't have to like someone to deal with that person in Christian love. Now I knew this intellectually, but as I began to talk with this prisoner I began to really understand what it meant. Christian love has to do with caring about another person's welfare as much as you would if that person was a member of your family. You can show Christian love to someone you hate. That doesn't mean your hate is unimportant to God. Hate eats away at our lives and causes **us** more damage than others. But, even if you hate someone, you don't have to act on that hate and you can do what you can to insure the welfare of that person.

Christian love does not require that you let someone else hurt you or take advantage of you. You don't have to ignore the reality that the world is filled with dangerous and destructive people. But you do need to care about the welfare of this person who you may hate, despise and fear. This is still a hard task, but maybe more achievable than affection.

Wesley had to address this issue early on when the Methodist societies starting forming. Wesley spread Methodism through some of the poorest, roughest areas of England. Through city slums and mining camps, and even in the prisons at a time when the principal penalty for many crimes was hanging. He had to give his people a standard for living that they could understand and use day to day in often harsh and violent environments. And so the three general rules of the Methodist societies were born:

Do no Harm
Do all the Good you can
Stay In Love with God

Do no harm. So far as it is in your power, do not add to the world's hurt. Are you entitled to revenge? Instead of getting mad, you want to get even? Get mad instead. You have a choice between a kind response or a hurtful response. Chose the kind response or don't respond at all. Do all within your power to minimize the harm you cause.

Imagine what the world around us starts to look like if we just seek to minimize the harm we cause. Every decision we make might have harmful consequences, but to the extent we can avoid harming others the world is a better place.

One way we can cause harm is by the example we set. I once had a Lutheran pastor take me to task because the United Methodist Church uses unfermented juice, non-alcoholic juice, for communion. I pointed out to him that, in the congregation I then served, there were a high number of sober alcoholics. People who had been on the wagon for years, some for decades but they all knew that they were one drink away from getting caught back up into the cycle of drinking. Using wine for communion might be "more biblical," but it also constituted a temptation to people who were already being tempted daily. Must I effectively deny them the sacrament by requiring that they either take the wine or go without? Even if I offered both wine and juice and let people choose wasn't I still putting temptation before them?

You parents, have you ever moderated your own behavior conscious of how you were an example for your children? Maybe as a teenager, have you ever moderated your behavior as an example for younger children?

There are many ways that we cause harm to others. We can't avoid them all, and sometimes it's a matter of choosing the least harmful conduct we can. But, to the extent that the matter is under your control, strive to do no harm.

To the extent you can, **do good**. This is not complicated. Rule one, minimize the harm you cause. Rule two, maximize the good you do.

No one of us can change the world, and we are not called to change the world. We are called to care about the world and the people around us. We are even called to care for the people we don't much like. As I told my prison friend, Christian love is about caring, not affection.

Wesley believed that acts of compassion were channels for the Grace of God to work in the world and in our own lives. As we practice what we preach, as we seek to live our lives in relationship to the world, God's grace is working in our lives. Whenever we help others we invite God's Grace to work in our lives as well.

What if someone takes advantage of you and your willingness to help? You know what? That's gonna happen. Someone is going to come to you seeking help and, in actuality, it's nothing but a con; someone trying to get something for nothing. But, if you let that fear keep you from taking a chance you'll pass up many opportunities to offer help. You, and the world, will be poorer for it.

I know I've been taken advantage of many times over the years. Sometimes over the years I'd get 15 to 20 requests for help of one type or another every week. Some of these people were scammers, and I usually

figured out who they were over time. I'd be a lot more circumspect in offering them help. But the majority of people were folks who had fallen on hard times and discovered that our society, in general, is not very tolerant of poverty. There are some proverbs that speak of this:

*4 Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.*

*7 If the poor are hated even by their kin,
how much more are they shunned by their friends!*
19:4,7NRSV

In this society, there **are not** a lot of avenues for obtaining needed help, no matter who you are. Your simple act of kindness and compassion might just have an impact beyond all proportion to what you expect. Dare to do good. In so far as it is in your power, do good.

Stay in Love with God. Actually, Wesley's rule was "Observe the ordinances of God." By that he meant, worship regularly, receive the sacrament of communion, study scripture daily, pray and fast. A United Methodist Bishop rephrased the Rule "Stay in Love With God," and I much prefer that version. I think it does a better job of expressing what Wesley was trying to say. Unless we keep our hearts and minds focused on God, we go astray.

Come together in worship. Remind yourself who you are and whose you are every week. You are the Body of Christ made so by the Spirit of God. Worship reminds us of that.

Share the sacrament of Communion. Communion is not a meaningless liturgy. It is an expression of who we are as a people. We come together as Jesus commanded, gather around the table as Jesus commanded, and we share the elements and remember as Jesus commanded. We ask that God make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world. We are a people of the table.

Read the scripture. Share the study of scripture with one another. It is through the daily reading of scripture that we hear the word of God for our lives. It's through the joint study of scripture that we experience the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

Pray. Come before God with an open heart, ready to experience the presence of God. Pray for the Church, for your family, for one another, for the world. There is a power in prayer that we often discount. Scripture reminds us to pray without ceasing, in good times and bad. Prayer is a way of moving our lives closer to God. Prayer helps sustain us and recharge us for the work we are called to do.
Stay in Love with God.

Three Simple Rules. **Do no harm, Do Good, Stay in Love with God.** Most of what scripture has to say, most of what Christ said when he walked the earth, can be summed up in those three rules.

Message from the Lay leader

Greetings!

As your Lay Leader, I would like to take this opportunity to communicate to all of the congregation Trinity's Ministry Goals for 2014. At the Program Council meeting held in January, Pastor Dennis Meaker presented his vision and ministry goals for Trinity and challenged the Program Council to meet these goals. In turn, the Program Council adopted these goals and pledged support for completing them over the next 12 months. I have felt led to communicate to the congregation as a whole the goals we have set forth and pledged to accomplish, and ask for everyone's prayers and support for meeting these goals.

- Bring in a total of ten new members this year. Have five confessions of faith.
- Increase average worship attendance by 20%
- Develop enough interest within the congregation to be able to start one new bible study this year.
- Have at least one "non-worship" event at the Church each month whose purpose is to invite the broader community to come to the Church and become acquainted with its members and ministries.
- Offer a VBS program this year (need volunteers within the church to organize)

Achieving the goal of having at least one "non-worship" event each month has already challenged the Men's Club to host a pancake breakfast this coming Saturday, March 1st at 8:00 a.m. I hope you can attend and support this event. Please contact me if you have any ideas that would invite the community in to Trinity to learn about the ministries of our Church.

As Methodists we are a "connected" church. We continue to support missions in our community as well as mission work throughout the world. But our "mission field" is also our neighbor, and focusing on the ministries that serve the needs of our congregation and community. I am asking that you please communicate with me or Dennis any needs or concerns that you may have. I want to encourage an environment of two-way communication so that we are "connected" to each other as we seek ways to serve as a congregation.

In the weeks ahead I'll be highlighting upcoming special events that will be opportunities for each of us to share the love of Christ with our neighbor. See you this Saturday at the pancake breakfast and Sunday at worship!

Brooks Crowell
Lay Leader,
Trinity UMC

The Poverty and Justice Bible

The Poverty & Justice Bible is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to www.Justicebible.org.

*³³ The LORD will listen
when the homeless cry out,
and he will never forget
his people in prison. Ps 69:33 CEV*

If you look at Leviticus and Deuteronomy, which contain much of the Law of the people of Israel you will find repeated comments along these lines: *God hears the cries of those you oppress just as he heard yours when you were slaves in Egypt and Remember, you were once slaves in Egypt and God heard your cries.* Too often Christians think of the Law of Israel as a meaningless collection of rules about preparing food and making sacrifices. However, there was also a lot of substance covering how to live in community. Underlying that law was the foundational understanding that God cares about how we live and how we treat one another. The Law constantly encouraged people to see themselves when they looked at people who were hurting; to remind themselves that they were once in need as well.

³⁷ Jesus said:

Don't judge others, and God won't judge you. Don't be hard on others, and God won't be hard on you. Forgive others, and God will forgive you. ³⁸ If you give to others, you will be given a full amount in return. It will be packed down, shaken together, and spilling over into your lap. The way you treat others is the way you will be treated. Luke 6:37-38 CEV

It is this connection between how you treat others and the response of God that is taken up by Jesus in this passage from Luke. The command not to judge others is not a command to ignore evil, but a command not to measure your concern for others by your estimation of their righteousness. We often see this behavior wrongly modeled in the modern concept of the “deserving poor.” Some divide the poor into classes by whether they merit any assistance. While it is tempting to reuse assistance to someone who is drug addicted or otherwise the author of their fate, that is not the biblical standard. Jesus would say, “Leave the judging to one better qualified to judge.”

Bible Study

For the last two years I have led a bible study on Thursday mornings. We are currently studying the Book of Psalms. There is room for as many as would like to participate. Please call me if you have questions or simply come and be a part of our study. We meet from 10:00 to 11:30 on Thursday mornings.

I believe that the study of scriptures with other Christians is an essential part of our journey as Disciples. If you would like to be a part of a bible study at another time, during the day or evening, please contact me. If we can interest four or five people in gathering at a particular time I would be glad to lead another study.

Disciple Bible Study Opportunity

Disciple Bible Study is a 32 week study of the bible from Genesis to Revelation. It has guided many people to a deeper understanding of scripture and their faith over the years. Many in the Church have completed this study.

I have been approached by two people who would be interested in a Disciple Bible Study that met from 7:00 to 9:00 on Thursday evenings. I would like to get at least five more people to participate in this study. If you have considered undertaking a study of the bible before, this is a wonderful opportunity. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please contact me.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

March 16th : The Journey to Easter: *There's No Map.* We are on a Journey of Discipleship. But where will that lead us? My texts are Genesis 12:1-4a and John 3:1-17.

March 23rd : The Journey to Easter: *God Walks With Us.* There are things we have to do alone. But the Gospel remains. As we remind ourselves each Sunday, God is always present with us. The trick is for us to be present for God. My texts are Exodus 17:1-7 and Romans 5:1-11.

Worship Leaders Schedule

March 16

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Pat Moran & Rachel Newman, **Greeters**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Ushers**

March 23

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

Announcements

Please join us for a reception honoring **Colette Keyser** for her wonderful service to Trinity as our accompanist this Sunday, **March 16th** following the service.

Order forms for **Easter Lillies** will be located on the shelves inside the side door. The lilies are \$8.00 each and can be given in memory of or to honor a loved one, a friend or family member. Brooks is coordinating this process.

The dates for serving at **61st United Methodist Church** are **April 19, August 16, November 15**. These occasions are all Saturdays. We are planning one more date but at the time of this writing, the date is uncertain.

Jeanne Rybolt and Julia Moore are planning an **Easter egg hunt** for the church. This event is planned for **Saturday, April 19**. (Easter Sunday is April 20). Further details will be forthcoming.

Our **nursery** will have a paid staff member and will also need a volunteer each week. Please let Judy know if you would be willing to serve in the nursery during church hours on a rotating basis so that a schedule can be drafted.

March Birthdays

Pat Moran, Marty Bauguess, Jeff McKearnan, Tom Moore, Herb Haynes, Mary Ellen Salazar

Happy Birthday to each of you!