

## 4 Week Study - Three Simple Rules / Reuben Job

*(All Scripture taken from New Revised Standard Version)*

Open session with the “Prayer at the Beginning of the Day” found on pages 69-70.

Close session with the “Prayer at Midday” found on pages 71-72.

Sing the hymn “*Stay in Love with God*” (p77) as a benediction – It is short enough to be repeated 3-4 times or more.

Read the chapters in the week before discussion.

You may want to substitute any of the other listed scriptures for the “Consider this scripture.”

### Session I Charting a New Course

Even as people of faith, we find our lives can be messy, filled with addiction, fretfulness, and fears. John Wesley believed that living a holy and good life required help from a caring community, commitment to the practice of spiritual discipline, and ongoing instruction. For him, the Great Commandment (see below) superseded all others as “a guide to the highest form of faithfulness” (p.9). Wesley gave the Methodist movement General Rules which were the practical application of what it meant to follow Christ – they were outlined and the people were instructed on them within the class structure. Accountability for practice was centered in the classes that formed the United Societies (pg. 17 & Discipline ¶103). Thus, the General Rules became distilled into this behavioral trinity – “**Do No Harm, Do Good, Stay in Love with God.**” These three simple rules gave new life to the movement (p.17). Living in a new way, becoming a new creation is risky business. It requires sacrifice - the willingness to undergo a radical transformation – it requires creating a way through the wilderness where there was no way before.

**Consider this scripture: Mark 12:29-31.** Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

**Read:** Preface / Introduction (pp. 7-17)

#### Questions:

1. Lack of reconciliation in our world makes our faithfulness to Christ seem inauthentic. How can we say we are Christians when we behave toward one another the way we do?
2. How are we to listen to Jesus? How are we to live our lives? Is there a better way to practice our faith that includes and is open to others?

3. Do we look at one another and see ourselves becoming one in Christ? Can others look at us and see God at work in our lives? Do we have life-giving lives?
4. What is the path to radical faithfulness for you? What does this mean for you? What would it take for you to be on that road?
5. My desire to “do good” is not limited by the thoughts and actions of others, nor is it controlled by that of others, for I have decided to follow Jesus! This is also a song that Christians of the Garo tribe in India sang. Although the author is anonymous, it was translated into the English language prior to the 1950’s. The hymn tune is from an Indian Folk Melody. The words are:
  - “I have decided to follow Jesus; I have decided to follow Jesus;
  - I have decided to follow Jesus; No turning back, no turning back.
  - (2) Though I may wonder, I still will follow...;
  - (3) The world behind me, the cross before me...;
  - (4) Though none go with me, still I will follow...;
  - (5) Will you decide now to follow Jesus?...”<sup>1</sup>

How does this song speak to you and your experience? How does it relate to what you just read?

## Additional Scriptures

**1 Corinthians 13:11-13.** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

**John 17: 11.** And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. (**Jesus’ prayer**)

**Colossians 3:12-17.** As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Galatians 5:22-26.** By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

---

<sup>1</sup> More information about this tune can be found at [www.ajoyfulnoise.net/followJesus.htm](http://www.ajoyfulnoise.net/followJesus.htm).

## Session II Do No Harm

“By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced”  
Discipline 2004 ¶103

Story #1 - Hayden Panettiere, a young actress (18 y/o), believes that humans have a responsibility to care for the other creatures that inhabit our world. In 2007 she and a group of other young people disrupted the annual dolphin hunt in Taiji, Wakayama, Japan. Japan protested that she was interfering with their national governance. That year she also protested to both Norway and Japan regarding their whale hunts, and spoke to the UN regarding this issue and was given an award for compassion by PETA.

Story #2 - Robyn “Rihanna” Fenty (20 y/o), a young hip-hop songstress founded a charity in 2006 called **BELIEVE**. This company has as its goal to inspire and protect children all over the world. Though her organization usually helps children with leukemia, she recently helped a young mother of two in New York find a bone marrow donor for herself. It is her desire to use her star-power to help those who are unable to help themselves.

**Consider this scripture: Galatians 5:14-15.** For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

**Read:** Do No Harm (pp. 19-32)

### Questions:

1. This rule gives us space to consider consequences, and alternatives to thoughts, words, and deeds – space enough to seek a common good, to seek common ground. “Do no harm” is a conscious intention – a plan to bring about peace, to disarm, to transform. What is the common ground in the two stories told above, or is there one?
2. Bishop Job advises us that to “do no harm” is a “radical” response, and a radical action to God’s grace (p. 24). To make a sincere effort, we must give up the assumed position of rightness that we use to determine if we are faithfully following in Jesus’ path. Read the passage from **Luke 14:28, 33** in light of this statement. What is the difference between “being right” and following after Jesus?
3. “To abandon the ways of the world for the way of Jesus is a radical step” (p.26). Take any one of these three statements and determine if and how it speaks to your life, and whether it feels true to you.
  - (a) To do no harm is easy to say but very difficult to do... because we have no control over where it will take us or what it will demand from us.
  - (b) There is no bartering with the will of God.
  - (c) When we stand with Jesus we give up being right in exchange for justice and mercy.

4. The hymn “*Where He Leads Me*” (UMH # 338), speaks to the radical willingness of giving up one’s life to follow Jesus in that his journey through the garden and to the cross becomes our path. How does this hymn relate to this chapter?
5. To “do no harm” requires an earnest appraisal of ourselves, how we live, and how we practice our faith. To “do no harm” is a radical, transformative, compassionate, and loving practice. Bishop Job asks us whether it is possible to never harm anyone or anything ever. How would you answer this?
6. Being transformed into Jesus and being able to see others as children of God requires that we invest in becoming agents of healing, and vessels of compassion. Is this the same as turning the other cheek?

## **Additional Scriptures**

**Psalms 141:3.** Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.

**Proverbs 13: 3.** Those who guard their mouths preserve their lives; those who open wide their lips come to ruin.

**Colossians 4:6.** Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

**Luke 14: 28, 33.** For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

**1 Peter 5:7.** Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.

**Luke 6: 39-42.** He also told them a parable: ‘Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, “Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,” when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

## Session III      Do Good

By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort; and as far as possible, to all.... Discipline 2004 ¶103

Story #1 - A 2008 television ad campaign for Target, Inc., has a byline that says: “Doing good is easy, when doing good is automatic.”

Story #2 - Film star – Natalie Portman is the Ambassador of Hope for FINCA International, an organization that provides small loans and financial assistance to women in developing countries to start small businesses and cottage industries. It is an organization that teaches women to “fish” so that they may feed themselves and care for their families and communities.

**Consider this scripture: Romans 12:9-20.** Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Read:** Do Good (pp. 33-49)

### Questions:

1. Bishop Job speaks of doing good as, “a proactive way of living,” and calls it a universal commandment without limitations, qualifications, or exemptions (p. 37). What does it mean to “do good?”
2. What are the boundaries of goodness? Are there controls or stipulations on goodness? Who determines if enough “goodness” has been done?
3. Peacemaking and conflict resolution can nourish and strengthen others but they are complex activities requiring skill, resolution, and compassion. How do they equate to doing good? Which seems more easily available to the average person?

4. It is the call of discipleship that guards your life and enables you to “do good.” The call to discipleship often leads us to places where we would not have chosen to go on our own; it calls us to step outside of our comfort zone.  
What have you been urged by your call to do? What happened in your life as a result of that experience? What blessings came your way?
5. Goodness is not about you or me. “Every act and every word must pass through the love and the will of God and there be measured to discover if its purpose does indeed bring good and goodness to all it touches” (p. 38). This is a clarion call to turn everything over to Jesus. Is it possible for you to live in this way?
6. Awareness is “the image of God fresh stamped on the heart.” Because of our heightened awareness, which serves for some as the conscious, we are intimately knowledgeable about our own behavior and already know in our hearts, how our behaviors and actions will be experienced by others. Because we do not live in a vacuum, we probably have some inkling as to how our behavior and actions will be judged by God. Think about some of your past behaviors.  
How do you respond to this statement? Will this have an impact on your future behaviors?
7. Selfishness or self-centeredness is often a cultural misinterpretation of healthy self denial. If we acknowledge that “each one of us is the deserving object of God’s love,” and that “staying in love with God is the foundation of all life” (p. 47), how do we rise to the challenge to put God first- above all else?
8. “Crucified, laid behind a stone, you lived to die, rejected and alone – like a rose trampled on the ground, you took the fall, and thought of me above all.”<sup>2</sup> Peter thought he loved Jesus above all and yet he denied Jesus not once, but three times. So, if this happened to Peter, how rejected is Jesus in our lives today? How rejected is he by our actions?

## Additional Scriptures

**3 John 11 b.** Whoever does good is from God.

**Acts 10:37-38.** That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

**Luke 6:27-28.** ‘But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.’

**Matthew 5:43-47.** ‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?’

---

<sup>2</sup> “Above All,” Words and Music: Paul Joseph Baloche & Leonard J Le Blanc

**Luke 22:27.** For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

**Zech 2:8.** For thus said the Lord of hosts (after his glory sent me) regarding the nations that plundered you: Truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye.

**Psalm 127.** Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved. Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

**John 15:5-7.** I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

**Matthew 26:75.** Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

“By attending upon all the ordinances of God...” Discipline 2004 ¶103

Statement #1 – We have been set apart by God to be stewards over creation. We have not been very successful at our calling when we consider the size of our carbon footprint either individually or as a nation. With global warming a reality, the receding of the polar icecaps underway, the loss of a chunk the size of Connecticut off Antarctica, we are called to put on the mind of Christ in order to change our circumstances.

Statement #2 – Many of the choices we have made in our lives lead us nowhere. It is a transformed heart that makes a difference in our world and in our lives. We cannot fix ourselves – we need God’s help.

**Consider this scripture: Psalm 105:4.** Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually.

**Read:** Stay In Love With God (pp. 51-63)

### **Questions:**

1. We have come to a time when our lifestyles are competing with the creative breath of God. As the “called out ones of God,” how are we prepared to show our love for God today?
2. Tell your story of a heart transformed by loving God alone.
3. John Wesley understood that the spiritual disciplines lead to and maintain faith by putting into practice what we have come to believe. Name some of the spiritual disciplines named in this chapter. List the ones you are not familiar with.  
What spiritual disciplines do you practice? How frequently? What is the outcome of those disciplines that you can describe?
4. What do you believe is the moral compass in our lives today?
5. How is it possible to live “from the inside out?” What does this phrase mean to you?
6. Keeping **Genesis 1:27** in mind, how does the phrase “in the image of God” apply to humankind?
7. Faith journeys are usually typified by a series of starts, missteps, forgiveness, and restarts. Do you believe this statement? Have you had experiences that look like this?
8. What new spiritual disciplines might you want to put into practice to continue the transformation of your life in Christ and to more fully love God?

## **Additional Scriptures**

**Genesis 1: 27.** So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

**Colossians 2: 6-7.** As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.** Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**John 21:15-17.** When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.

**John 21:18-19.** Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.’ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’

**John 4:1-4.** Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, ‘Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John’ – although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized – he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria.

**1 Peter 1:22-23.** Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

Thanks to Rev. Deborah Tinsley Taylor of the Northern Illinois Conference for her work in facilitating this project.

**Copyright © 2008, The Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church**