



United Methodist Youth Ministry Collective Free Resources

John Wesley's First Rule - Do No Harm Discussion

Presenter: This sounds like the easiest of all rules. After all, do no harm is essentially do nothing, right?

A story was told once upon a time, of a missions group that went to a border country in all sincerity to do great things for God. And they did. A house was built, children played with, skits performed, worship sung. And then it was lunchtime. As the youth group sat around eating their lunch and talking in English, they relaxed and considered themselves “off duty.” They assumed their hosts didn’t speak English. A joke started then spiraled downward as conversations do when everyone is tired.

After lunch, the pastor of the church the youth group was serving with asked the youth minister, “Please don’t come back. It will take me years to repair the damage your group’s conversation has caused.”

Presenter: The obvious point: Oh no! The hosts spoke English!

The less obvious point: It doesn’t matter what language the host speaks. All our actions and our words are fair game for people to judge our character. All our actions and words are fair game for people to judge our character.

Doing no harm is harder than it seems. It encompasses many of the practices we tend to take for granted. If you are committed to doing no harm, you are necessarily committed to: refusing to gossip, limiting your eye rolls, exaggerated sighs and sarcastic comments, bringing others into conflict (aka spreading drama) and generally practicing the old adage “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.”

Most of the time, doing no harm, means closing your mouth, quieting your thoughts, and actively looking for opportunities to listen. All of which are tremendously hard work!

It is not enough to will yourself to do no harm. We cannot keep ourselves from doing harm from simple willpower, at least not long-term. We will end up grumpy and exhausted. The secret, if there is one, is to grab a friend or two and work together on the means of grace.

To paraphrase John Wesley, fully embrace every means of grace!

Take a moment to work through the definitions of each piece of that sentence asking what does it mean, and how have you grown in your understanding of it by experiencing it?

Grace: the unmerited favor of God

Means: method

Means of grace: method of receiving the unmerited favor of God

Embrace: accept or support willingly and enthusiastically.

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What are the means of grace?

A few means of grace: Communion, worship, repentance, forgiveness, scripture, godly friendship.

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you remember a time someone harmed you on purpose? What about a time someone hurt you without even knowing?
2. How did you feel in the 1st situation? What about in the 2nd?
3. What is a practice you can commit to today to “do no harm”? What friend will you practice this with?
4. Which means of grace will you embrace today? With what friend?

This discussion is on the first of Wesley’s Three Simple rules. It’s great by itself, but even greater with its next two rules: Do Good and Stay in Love with God.

When People Say You Aren’t Good Enough: A Free Discussion Lesson

Not everyone in your world is encouraging. In fact, there are some people who seem focused on making you feel that you aren’t good enough. Paul was speaking to a group of people just like that and his words can continue to help us today.

Yeast Tag

Here’s a weird one! Two ways to play. One way is essentially tag. But as you are tagged, you also become “it.” Game continues until there is only one person left.

Another way: sit in a circle. Everyone closes their eyes and the leader selects one “yeast.” That person’s job is to wink at other members of the circle without getting caught. If someone makes

eye contact and get winked at, they too become yeast. Game continues until there is one person left or a yeast gets caught.

Discussion

Read Galatians 5:7-10

Paul is writing to a group of people who are being convinced that they are not good enough by a small group of people. How can we avoid the same trap?

1. What stuck out to you in this passage?
2. What made it hard about being the yeast? What made it hard about avoiding becoming the yeast?
3. What is something you *know* about yourself? What is something that helps define you?
4. In our scripture, there were some people in the church at Galatia that were trying to get people defined by old laws and no one could really measure up to them. How do we do that now?
5. Paul talks about yeast. What does yeast do to bread?
6. How can ideas-especially negative ones- spread?
7. Paul warns his congregation not to be fooled— how are some ways you have been fooled when you think about yourself?
8. We believe that through Christ, we are no longer defined by how good we are but rather how good God is in us—how does that affect the way you define yourself?
9. What is good yeast that you could start spreading about yourself and others?
10. Why is it important to believe that you are loved by God only because he loves you and not because of how good you are?

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