

Three Simple Rules

DO GOOD Ephesians 4:25-32

(Proverbs 18:21, 12:18; I Thessalonians 5:11)

INTRO: A time of unrest

- Around the world, governments falling
- At home, people not trusting their political leaders

A time of uncertainty

- Economies changing
- People losing their livelihoods

A time of violence

- Wars in other countries
- Violent protests at home

A. How many would say that's a pretty good description of the times we live in?

- Well, that's also how historians describe England in the 1700s
- 1- And in those dark days, a movement rose up that changed society
 - o It changed the way people think
 - o And it changed people's lives

This powerful movement that spread like wildfire, was called—Methodism

2- The leader of this movement was a very intense leader named John Wesley, and he told his followers, "If you want to be part of this movement – if you want to change your life and the lives of others – then follow these three simple rules:

- Do No Harm
- Do Good
- Stay in Love with God

B. What Wesley taught the early Methodists, in a time not too different from ours, is still extremely relevant today:

First, “Do No Harm:”

- No fighting
- No lying
- No cheating
- No stealing
- No shady business deals
- No hurtful words

Second, “Do Good:”

- Help the poor
- Feed the hungry
- Visit the sick
- House the homeless
- Be kind
- Be compassionate
- Make a difference

Third, “Stay in Love with God:”

- In other words, develop and maintain a close, personal relationship with God through spiritual habits like,
 - o Prayer
 - o Bible Study
 - o Worship
 - o Holy Communion

Do No Harm
Do Good
Stay in Love with God

Today we talk about the second one. **LET’S PRAY.**

I. Author and leadership coach Tim Sanders tells the story of a young manager named Steve, who was challenged by one of Sanders's radio interviews.

- A. Steve resolved to visit each of his employees, all six of whom he had not seen face to face in over six months even though they worked in the same building and on the same floor. Steve wanted to tell each of them how much he appreciated them, and name one specific thing they did well.

After the visit from Steve, one of his software engineers, Lenny, presented him with an Xbox gaming console. Steve was taken aback, as he knew Lenny had taken pay cuts over the last year.

Lenny explained that his mother had died the previous year, and he had become extremely depressed, and he had bought a gun.

Lenny said,

“I started a routine every night after work: eating a bowl of Ramen noodles, listening to Nirvana, and getting the gun out. This lasted for months, but in the last few weeks, I was getting closer and closer.

“Then you came into my cubicle, put your arm around me, and told me you appreciated me because I turn in all my projects early, and that helps you sleep at night. You also said that I have a great sense of humor and that you’re glad I came into your life.

“That night I went home, ate Ramen, and listened to Nirvana—and when I got the gun out, it scared me silly for the first time. All I could think about was what you said—that you were glad I came into your life.

“The next day I went back to the pawnshop and sold the gun. I remembered that you had said you wanted an Xbox. So, for my life, you get this game. Thanks, boss.”

B. Proverbs 18:21—

“The tongue has the power of life and death...”

--Proverbs 18:21

The words you speak could literally save a life.

1- Last week I talked about all the harm we do with our words:

- Gossip
- Sarcasm
- Insults
- Put-downs
- Hurtful words spoken in anger

I talked about

- reputations destroyed by words of gossip
- marriages destroyed by words of anger
- young lives destroyed by words like, “you’ll never amount to anything”

2- Today I want to talk about all the good we can do with our words:

Proverbs 12:18 –

The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

--Proverbs 12:18

You might not have a lot of money to give,

- you might not be able to feed the poor
- visit the sick
- volunteer every day at the Shepherds’ Center

But you can bring healing just by the words you say.

C. *[Staff appreciation week]* – That keeps us going! That makes us want to work harder – that makes us want to serve you better!

- But you know, I’ve had the opposite. In my many years of ministry – at other churches –
 - o I’ve had people bless me out in meetings
 - o I’ve had people gossip about me unfairly
 - o I’ve had people express their valid criticism in ways that were hurtful
- And you know what? That doesn’t keep me going! That doesn’t make me want to work harder! That just makes me want to quit!

SO THANK YOU, MAIN STREET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, for using your words to bring life!

II. How many of you have seen the movie, “The Blind Side?”

[Explain]

A. Liegh Anne and Sean Touhy were being interviewed about a book they wrote, and the interviewer said, “But what if people don’t have the money to do what you did?”

- And the Touhy’s said, “It doesn’t take money.”

And they told a story they heard when they went to Washington to advocate for foster children:

There is a little-known Congressional initiative to give internships to young people who were so unwanted they have aged out of the foster care system. This Senator employs one such young man.

One day the Senator passed by the mailroom, and paused and turned around. He noticed that his intern, fresh out of foster care, had reorganized all the old files. “This room has never looked so clean,” the Senator said. “You did a great job.”

A few minutes later the Senator decided to get a cup of coffee. He returned to mailroom and found that his intern had tears streaming down his face.

“Son, did I offend you?” he asked.

“No,” the young man said. “That’s the first time anyone has ever told me that I did something good.”

And the Touhys said:

This gift had nothing to do with money. What this kid needed most was encouragement and self-worth, and that’s what he was given.

B. In Ephesians 4:29, from today's Scripture, the Apostle Paul says,

²⁹Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

1- On the one side, we've got "unwholesome" talk –

-the original Gk. word means "rotten" -- putrefying, stinky!

2- On the other side we've got talk that is helpful for building others up

-the original Gk. word for helpful can mean good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, excellent, distinguished, upright, honorable, or healthy

--Which would you rather have coming out of your mouth – all those wonderful things – or stuff that's rotten?

C. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul says,

¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

--1 Thessalonians 5:11

1- Throughout the New Testament, we find the early Christians constantly encouraging each other:

- In Colossians, Paul writes,
"I'm sending Tychicus to encourage you"
- To both Timothy and Titus, he says,
"Encourage your churches"
- The church in Jerusalem wrote a letter to the church in Antioch, and Acts says,
"They were encouraged"

- Whenever somebody went somewhere or came back from somewhere, it says
“The brothers and sisters encouraged them.”

2-And then there’s this guy named Joseph of Cyprus, whose nickname was

Barnabas
“Son of Encouragement”

-- If it hadn’t been for him, the early church never would have accepted the man who became the Apostle Paul!

-Everybody else was afraid of Paul, but Barnabas took him under his wing and encouraged him

III. How many have studied a foreign language?

A. Foreign languages are hard to learn!

- Years ago I tried to learn Cambodian... *[story]*

B. Fortunately, the language of encouragement is not that hard to learn!

- Encouraging words can be as simple as:

- “You do that really well.”
- “How *are* you, really?”
- “What can I do to help?”
- “Tell me about your day, your job, your kids....”
- “What you said helped me.”
- “Thanks for leading / helping.”
- “I’m proud of you.”
- “Please forgive me.”
- “I prayed for you today.”
- “I missed you.”

--It’s really simple:

Encouraging words are those that BUILD UP rather than tear down.

IV. Let me ask you something: What would it be like if the church became known as the most encouraging place on earth?

A. What would it be like if:

- people who get yelled at all week by their bosses, get put down by their work associates....come to the church & say, "Hey, these people think I'm OK?"
- everybody who walks in that door was made to feel important, made to feel special, made to feel loved by the words we say and the actions we take towards ?
- every time somebody did something right, there was a whole crowd of church members right there ready to pat them on the back & say, "way to go"?
- every time somebody did something wrong, that same crowd of members was there to hug that person & say, "You're forgiven & we still love you?" --instead of the things we normally say when somebody does s'thing wrong?
- we took all the energy that normally goes into complaining and grumbling and put it into encouraging one another and building each other up?

--Don't you think people would flock to a church like that??

CONCLUSION: Think of somebody you could encourage...