

Introduction

Upward, Inward, Outward

Go around the group and introduce yourself. What are you hoping to get out of this study? Are you excited? Do you have any concerns?

Read The Forward & Summary

Read pages 9-10 *Forward*

Read pages 13-14 of the *Introduction*

Overview of the Study

Our first session together is a bit different than the next three. Today we are going to begin a 22-day journey together to deepen our relationships with each other and our relationship with God. Starting tomorrow, we will begin our daily readings. Each daily reading takes a close look at one of John Wesley's questions of self-examination.

Before the next session, please read through the first seven questions. Try your best to read one question a day. Our worship at Manchester UMC during this study is set up to support us on our journey.

As Pastor Andy talked about on Sunday, it was small groups, Methodist "classes" that fostered the rapid growth of the Methodist movement. Small groups foster accountability as well as care and compassion for one another. By taking the time with our own personal, daily study AND being in community together, we are hopeful to experience a transformation of faith.

Scripture

Ecclesiastes 4:7-16 (NRSV)

⁷Again, I saw vanity under the sun: ⁸the case of solitary individuals, without sons or brothers; yet there is no end to all their toil, and their eyes are never satisfied with riches. "For whom am I toiling," they ask, "and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

⁹Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.

¹¹Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? ¹²And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

¹³Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king, who will no longer take advice.

¹⁴One can indeed come out of prison to reign, even though born poor in the kingdom. ¹⁵I saw all the living who, moving about under the sun, follow that youth who replaced the king; ¹⁶there was no end to all those people whom he led. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a chasing after wind.

Sermon Focus

This week Pastor Andy talked about something called the “The Three General Rules of the Methodist Church.” They are (in order): Do no harm. Do good. Attend upon the ordinances of God.

The first rule is to do no harm. If most people lived their life just following this rule the world would be a much better place. When we feel lost or unsure about what comes next in life, following the first rule would do us well. It’s okay to not know what to do. It’s okay to stop and think on our actions for a bit before we do something we regret. The first rule is about avoiding harmful actions. So, we start with “doing no harm.” We start with not starting. We start with resting. We start with avoiding.

The second rule is to do good. It’s not as though most people intentionally try to do bad. That’s not what this rule is pointing to. This rule is a follow up to the first rule. Once we are avoiding doing harm, the next thing we should do is actively engage in doing good. What is one good thing that we can do for someone today? The General Rules are simple to understand but truly take practice to live out. These rules are not just about how we treat others, but also how we treat creation, and how we treat ourselves. Ponder that for a minute.

The final rule is to attend upon the ordinances of God. These include what we might think of as typical practices in the church: the participation in public worship, participation in Bible study, reading and studying scripture, taking communion, praying and fasting.

Discussion Questions

1. Where else have you heard the phrase “do no harm”?
2. What does it mean to do good?
3. How often do you attend upon the ordinances of God?
4. Why do people do better with an accountability group?

Wesley Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.