

## Three Simple Rules

June 2020

Several years ago I received a complimentary copy of Bishop Reuben P. Job's little book "Three Simple Rules" [Abingdon, 2007], I must confess that I tossed it into my briefcase and promptly forgot about it. In the first place I tend to be suspicious of free books because, in my experience, they often come with an agenda. Further, despite my years of ministry I am not all that enamored with rules - in the wrong hands they often get misused.

When I actually picked up and opened the book, I discovered, much to my chagrin, that my disdain had cut me off from a wonderful little resource. Mea Culpa. Mea Maxima culpa!

It was his preface that engaged me. Bishop Job writes:

"We live in such a fast-paced, frenzied, and complex world that it is easy to believe we are all trapped into being someone we do not wish to be and living a life we do not desire to live. We long for some way to cut through the complexities and turbulence of everyday life. We search for a way to overcome the divisiveness that separates, disparages, disrespects, diminishes, and leaves us wounded and incomplete. We know deep within that the path we are on is not healthy or morally right and that it cannot lead to a positive ending."

He invites us "...to turn to the one who created us, formed us, and loves us as we are and yet always seeks to lead us to become more than we are," and "...to turn to our roots and seek what it was in the past that enabled persons like us to live courageously and faithfully in their time."

He challenges us: "Do we look at one another and see movement towards our oneness in Christ? Do others look at us and see God at work in our life together? Is our way of living life-giving rather than life-draining? Is our way of living one that will enhance the quality of life in each of us for as long as we live?"

Then turning to the wisdom of John Wesley, rooted as it is in scripture, Bishop Job offers to us Wesley's three simple rules for living.

1. Do No Harm
2. Do Good
3. Stay in Love With God

Do No Harm! To commit to this means "an examination of the way we live and practice our faith," "to be on guard so that all my actions and even my silence will not add injury to another of God's children or to any part of God's creation," and "to see each person as a child of God - a recipient of love unearned, unlimited, and undeserved - just like myself" - thereby being "formed and transformed to live more and more as Jesus lived."

Do Good! "Doing good, like doing no harm, is a proactive way of living." It will mean seeking what is best for all. "It will mean that the words and acts that wound and divide will be changed to words and acts that heal and bring together. It will mean that movements that seek to divide and conquer will become movements that seek to unite and empower all. It will mean that the common good will be my first thought and what is good for me will become a secondary thought."

Stay in Love with God! The genius of Wesley was his commitment to spiritual disciplines that “teach us to live our lives in harmony with something larger than ourselves and larger than that which the world values as ultimate.” He understood that the public worship of God, the Lord’s Supper, private and family devotions, searching the scriptures, Bible study, and fasting teach us of God’s love for us and keep us in love with God.

Do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God: this is the Christian faith at its most basic. What a wonderful gift to the world we would be if we actually lived this way! There are those who claim that such a faith is unrealistic and impractical in the modern world. But G.K. Chesterton’s response to that complaint is still pertinent: “Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.”

As we wrestle with the next steps in our response to the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, let me commend to you the wisdom of this little book. Do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. If we let this wisdom inform how we live, how we interact with people, how we will live into the future, we will be equipped to live faithfully.