

“This Year I Will---Do No Harm”  
Romans 13:8-10 (NIV), Matthew 7:12 (NLT)  
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Today, January 6 is Epiphany. Epiphany means appearance or manifestation. Epiphany is 12 days after Christmas. (The 12 days of Christmas.) On Epiphany we celebrate the Wise Men following the manifestation/the appearance of the star to find the Christ Child and they presented the Christ Child with gifts of gold, Frankincense—I mean frankincense and myrrh.

Western Christians celebrate the revelation of God the son coming as a baby and being discovered by the Wise Men. The Eastern Christians (Greek Orthodox and others) commemorate Epiphany with the Baptism of Jesus where at that time there was the manifestation to the world that He was the son of God (This is my son in whom I am well pleased.)

The word epiphany, the word---not the Religious Day we commemorate the Wise Men, means a moment of sudden revelation or insight. For example, “I have an epiphany. If I don’t give a sermon...the worship service would be much shorter...Woo-hoo!!!”

On this Epiphany Sunday what revelation or insight do you have about resolutions, promises, commitments you want to make to God in 2019? Let’s talk about resolutions. This year I will...

(following from 10 Top New Year's Resolutions for Success and Happiness in 2019 By Peter Economy on website inc.com, published on January 1, 2019)

According to research on the topic, about 60 percent of us admit that we make New Year's resolutions, but only about 8 percent are successful in achieving them. Regardless of whether or not we achieved our previous resolutions, most of us go right ahead and make a new set of resolutions -- hoping for the best.

Here are a few more interesting facts about New Year's resolutions: Saving money is one of the top 5 New Year's resolutions and also in the top 5 for most commonly failed.

**Here are the top-10 New Year's resolutions according to a survey of 2,000 people:**

- 10. Spend more time with family and friends (13%)**
- 9. Drink less alcohol (15%)**
- 8. Find another job (16%)**
- 7. Read more (17%)**
- 6. Quit smoking (21%)**
- 5. Learn a new skill or hobby (26%)**
- 4. Save more and spend less (32%)**
- 3. Lose weight (54%)**
- 2. Exercise more (65%)**
- 1. Diet or eat healthier (71%)**

Okay, ‘fess up. If you made a New Year’s Resolution did you have one of these? Go ahead raise your hand if one of your resolutions was up there. XXXXX

In that same survey this was discovered: “Over half of respondents said they fail their resolution before January 31st.”

(Video: <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/79499/new-years-resolutions> )

I hope you do give up. Oh, not on yourself, but on give it up and literally trust and turn to God. You can’t do it on your own. Something has to change. Let’s each look in the mirror and say...It’s me that has to change. There are some things I cannot change, in fact there are many things I cannot change...but with God’s help *I* can change. God has to be behind it. God has to give you strength. We change because we have the manifestation, the epiphany of Christ coming to us. Yes, He brings hope, peace, joy and love. And as Rev. Cathy wonderfully preached on last week, we know we are to live by faith. By faith I want you to live by 3 things this year. Oh, we can call them resolutions, but they are actually 3 simple rules. We begin the year with a series about these 3 things. Today...This Year I will---Do No Harm.

The Apostle Paul gives us our scriptural basis: **Romans 13:8-10 New International Version (NIV)**<sup>8</sup> **Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.** <sup>9</sup>**The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”** <sup>10</sup>**Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”**

Now I think you would agree if I said that I would expect you to follow the commandments. Therefore, I would expect you not to commit adultery, not to murder, not to steal, and not to steal. But here is the other expectation that Paul says is summed up in this, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Here it is: Love does *no harm* to a neighbor. Doing no harm is fulfilled when we truly love.

Now we could get into a discussion about “Well, Dave who is my neighbor? Dave, you don’t live in my neighborhood, you don’t know my yucky neighbors.” Well, I’ve preached on it before, but suffice it to say---neighbor is anybody we would come in contact with. More than that neighbors are here and around the world. We have one Father God who created us all.

This year I will---do no harm. The New Year brings 365 opportunities, well since it is January 6<sup>th</sup>---359---359 opportunities to do no harm. Are you up to accomplishing this simple rule? Well, this simple rule we will find out is simple but not simplistic---it is profound and life changing.

Actually, the sermon series “This Year I Will,” is taken from the General Rules as established by John Wesley the founder of Methodism way back in 1743. And yes, these 3 rules...the 3 This Year I Will---is still very very relevant to today.

Reuben P. Job, wrote in his 2007 book, “Three Simple Rules (A Wesleyan Way of Living) said, “If do no harm is so simple and so easily understood, why then do so many do so much harm? Because it is not an easy rule; and it does demand a *radical trust* in God’s presence, power, wisdom, and guidance and a *radical obedience* to God’s leadership. Practicing our faith in the world requires our deepest resolve, our greatest faith, our unwavering trust, and a very, very large measure of God’s grace.” (page 24)

“Is it possible to live in this complex and violent world *without* doing harm? Are we supposed to turn the other cheek to those who distort the truth by selective use of the facts of any given situation? Is it wise to do no harm to those who seek to harm us, our future, or our reputation? Are we able to limit our response to a way that is not destructive to those who use false and violent words that seek to harm and destroy us? Is it possible to speak the truth in love and gentleness when others seem to speak the truth in love and gentleness when others seem to speak partial truth in anger and hatred?

Good questions---no GREAT questions.

Our scripture said “Love your neighbor as yourself.” So, before I address doing no harm to others, perhaps I need to address doing no harm to self. Now I am a bit apprehensive about giving you this list---I’m afraid Sarah will use it against me. You are welcome to write these down. This is an original list of how we Do No Harm To Self.

#### **Do No Harm to Self**

- 1. Eat healthier**
- 2. Exercise more**
- 3. Set boundaries**
- 4. Relax more, worry less**
- 5. Don’t keep beating yourself up**
- 6. Enjoy what God has given you**
- 7. Laugh**

Mayo Clinic (April 2016) had an article entitled “Stress Relief from Laughter? It’s No Joke.” They reported that laughing stimulates lungs and heart, can lower blood pressure, sets off endorphins, soothes tension, may improve immune system, can reduce pain, improves your mood and increase personal satisfaction.

I even found another source that said laughing burns calories. Laughing 10-15 minutes a day burns approximately 40 calories enough to lose 4 pounds over the year.

- 8. Realize God is with you**
- 9. Be involved in spiritual disciplines (Bible Study, prayer, daily devotions)**
- 10. Treat yourself as a child of God.**

Now let me flip the phrase a little and give a list of how we DO harm to others.

### **How we DO harm to others**

- 1. By how we speak to them**
- 2. By our actions (or lack of actions)**
- 3. By being stubborn**
- 4. By being closed minded**
- 5. By being biased**
- 6. By being judgmental**
- 7. By being unwilling to understand**
- 8. By being prejudiced**
- 9. By being selfish**
- 10. By being conditioned by others rather than transformed by God.**

Let me go back to the book by Reuben Job, Three Simple Rules. If that is how we DO harm, then how do we do NO harm. Here's what Bishop Job says,

"It is a challenging path to walk. Yet, even a casual reading of the gospel suggest that Jesus taught and practiced a way of living that did no harm. His life, his way of life, and his teaching demonstrated so well this first simple rule." (Page 27)

"Is each day invested in healing not hurt? Wholeness instead of division. Harmony with Jesus. "When I commit myself to this way, I must see each person as a child of God---a recipient of love unearned, unlimited, and undeserved---just like myself." (page 31)  
Do we live as Jesus lived?"

So then as we try to keep things simple. How do we do no harm to others?

### **How do we do NO harm to others?**

- 1. "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you." Matthew 7:12 (NLT)**

Simple. Just one thing. Biblical.

I've talked how these 3 rules were Methodist. Allow me to share with you from the words of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism himself what it means to be a Methodist.

"A Methodist is one who has "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him; one who "loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; which is constantly crying out, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! My God and my all! Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion forever!" (The Character of a Methodist---John Wesley, in Works, Volume 8: page 341)

This year I will---Do No Harm.