

Welcome to 2021! Did you make any New Year's resolutions? About two-thirds of us do, and I bet you know what the number one resolution is – lose weight! And I bet that you know that most of us will not keep our resolutions. Here are some other popular resolutions that you probably won't keep:

- Clean out the back of the refrigerator
- Balance the checkbook
- Exercise
- Stop telling those little “white lies”
- Save money
- Be nicer to relatives

It's not surprising that we make a resolution just to give up on making resolutions at all. Yet, there is something compelling about that new calendar, the blank spaces waiting to be filled, that invites us to do something different, something new.

John Wesley, founder of the people called Methodists, had three simple rules to guide people in life, which are still relevant 250 years later. First, do no harm. If you are like me, that seems pretty simple and straightforward. I don't think of myself as doing harm to anyone, including myself, but on reflection I realize it hits closer to home than I'd like. Think of the ways we can harm ourselves in small ways. If I am in debt and pull out the credit card near its limit to buy something I don't need, I am doing harm. If my doctor has told me that I need to do certain things to live better and longer, but I ignore, or even do the opposite, I harm myself. If I betray a confidence or share a hurtful rumor (gossip), I harm another. All of a sudden, I realize the list can go on and on. So, how do you do no harm? I invite you to stop before you buy, eat, speak, etc., and ask yourself and God, will this do someone harm? If the answer is yes, avoid it.

Second, do all the good you can to as many as possible. It is popular to talk about random acts of kindness, but this is about doing deliberate acts of kindness. Jesus spells it out in Matthew 25 – feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned. Look for opportunities to do good. Buy an extra can and donate it to a food pantry. Tip even when picking up a to-go order. Open the door for someone. Give blood. Visit someone in a nursing home, when we can again. Find a passion and follow it.

Third, fall in love and stay in love with God in 2021. For Wesley, this meant going to worship (online or in the courtyard for the time being), reading God's word, praying, and participating in the sacraments, especially communion. Through these means of grace, we come to know God and grow closer to him.

These are three simple rules for living, and if we follow them, we will find ourselves truly blessed. Don't worry, like all resolutions, you'll break one or all of them. The good news is that God gives us second, third, fourth, millionth chances. So, resolve to keep going even when you fall down. May God be with you in the coming year!