

Series: "3 For 2016"

Text: Galatians 5:13-18, Colossians 3:12-14

Title: "No Harm"

Introduction: Good Morning BMZ! I'm so glad you are with us today as we BEGIN a NEW WORSHIP SERIES for a NEW YEAR called "3 For 2016"! We want to KICK OFF the NEW YEAR with 3 THINGS we can LIVE BY that will HELP US be more who GOD WANTS us to be in 2016! I'm glad you are here and HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

So, as we begin ... Do you ever FEEL like LIFE is moving very FAST? Do you ever feel like you are lucky just to hang in there for one more day? We often get so caught up in our day-to-day lives that we feel like we CAN'T SLOW DOWN for anything. Our calendars rule us instead of it being the other way around. The FASTER we move the FURTHER BEHIND we get. When our day is done, our 'TO-DO' list is LONGER instead of getting shorter and we have those moments when we WISH we could just GET OFF the RIDE. Life is kind of crazy.

THEN we come to WORSHIP and we hear God's Word tell us that we need to LIVE life a certain WAY, but it's impossible. Life's TOO BUSY to LIVE the WAY JESUS SAYS. The world we live in is in CHAOS. Same as the WORLD was WHEN Jesus arrived on the scene.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Century JUDEA, there were political controversies, battles for power in the home government and in the world, there was a high crime rate with murder and theft and racial tensions. There were wars and rumors of wars. There was ECONOMIC instability ... and then Jesus came. And AMID all that CHAOS, Jesus LIVED life like no one had ever seen before.

In 17<sup>th</sup> Century ENGLAND, things were much the same. There was POLITICAL unrest, class rivalries between the rich and the poor and everyone in between. There was a mass movement from the countryside to the cities in hopes to find work in the new "Industrial Revolution" factories. People again dealt with CRIME and arguments about MORAL TRUTHS and CASTE SYSTEMS and RACIAL Tensions.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in England, there was a young preacher named John Wesley who had started a movement out of the Anglican Church (Church of England). He had been successful in encouraging people to worship God instead of the Church and to become active in their faith. BUT, One of Wesley's greatest CONCERNS was that the people who were coming to a NEW relationship with Jesus Christ would be overwhelmed by the TEMPTATIONS and CHAOS of the world around them and FALL BACK into their OLD WAYS. John wanted to come up with A PLAN / A SYSTEM to help the new converts that would be SIMPLE to remember, EASY to translate to people of different economic status in England as well as the movement in the Americas. John Wesley's PLAN HELPED the people of that Christian movement live faithfully and courageously in their time and THOSE PEOPLE CHANGED their WORLD.

I believe that IF we FOLLOW John Wesley's PLAN (taken directly from Scripture ... he STUDIED carefully what PAUL did in HIS CHURCHES), we'll find that our lives and *schedules no longer rule us* ... the WORLD around us will have a *more difficult time tempting* us, and we will be *closer to Jesus* Christ in our faith and *closer to who God wants us to be* as individuals and as a Church. **I believe that we also can live faithfully and courageously in 2016 and change the world that we live in for the better.** So, as we go through these NEXT 3 WEEKS, we are going to learn about John Wesley's "THREE SIMPLE RULES", the rules he used to CHALLENGE CHRISTIANS to actually be "Christian."

If you have your Bible with you, turn with me to **Colossians 3** ... if you don't; no worries. All of our Scriptures for today will be up on the screen and much of what we are doing is in your program. If you don't own a Bible and would like one, please stop by Java Jct/Blessed Bean and someone will get you set up with your own Bible. Speaking of which...

*If you haven't already, I invite you to take out your message notes and Connection card... On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline walking us through our Scripture. You will see that there are blanks to fill in ... Please take the time to do so. Grab a pen and write down whatever else you think is important to you and your faith journey. After worship, drop off your CONNECTION CARD and take your notes home and refrigerate them. Please Re-read the Scripture and the notes to keep growing and learning. For those of you watching on-line, hit the button for notes and for CONNECTION CARD and stick with us. If you are watching/listening later, or IPODing; you can download the outline off of our website so you too can take notes.*

Let's pray and then we will press on with where we are going today... **LET'S PRAY (turn off marked lights during prayer)!**

As we get into this series, "3 For 2016", Our Scriptures for today come from Galatians 5 and Colossians 3.

Let me start with the writing to the COLOSSIANS ... Colossians 3:12-14 = <sup>12</sup> *Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.* <sup>13</sup> *Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.* <sup>14</sup> *Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.*<sup>1</sup>

Don't miss this ... this could be our THEME for ALL of 2016 ... "CLOTHE YOURSELVES..."

### **I. The Colossians and the Galatians**

Now, remember that Paul is writing to people ... PEOPLE LIKE US ... who are PART of CHURCHES and are TRYING their BEST to FOLLOW JESUS. I believe that they WANT TO FOLLOW JESUS WELL, they are just STRUGGLING. So, PAUL writes to the CHURCH in COLOSSAE ...

Paul CHALLENGES the CHURCH in COLOSSAE ... IF you really want to FOLLOW CHRIST, there are a COUPLE of things we need to be CLEAR ABOUT.

FIRST = GOD'S GOD! "Since GOD chose YOU to be the HOLY PEOPLE HE LOVES..." God CHOSE ... God MAKES us HOLY ... God LOVED us FIRST ...

SO ... if we are FOLLOWERS of JESUS, God DESERVES and DEMANDS a certain WAY of LIVING from US ... CLOTHE YOURSELVES!

SECOND = Notice that Paul DOES NOT SAY ... "God will CLOTHE YOU with..." He says, "CLOTHE YOURSELVES ... keep WORKING at it ... it WON'T BE EASY ... it will be a LIFELONG PROCESS... BUT, CLOTHE YOURSELVES!!"

Here's our CLOTHES:

**#1 = "Tenderhearted Mercy"** ... Giving what is NOT DESERVED! God shows us MERCY and gives us 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> chances even though we DON'T DESERVE IT! We are to DO the SAME for the people around us! Clothe Yourselves!!

**#2 = "Kindness"** ... Again, Jesus modeled it. It's Compassion and Generosity ... And we are reminded of it in Luke 6:35 = <sup>35</sup> *"Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked."*<sup>2</sup> Hmmm ... ARE WE?!? Are we KIND to those who are UNTHANKFUL and WICKED? Clothe Yourselves!!

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Col 3:12-14). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Lk 6:35). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

#3 = “**Humility**” ... Let’s just think the OPPOSITE of ARROGANCE. Our Scriptures tells us that JESUS, although He was GOD, was WILLING to come to us ... NOT as ROYALTY ... but as a BABY of a CARPENTER from NAZARETH. We also know that GOD pays ATTENTION to this. JESUS SAID... Matthew 23:12 = <sup>12</sup> *But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.* <sup>3</sup> Clothe Yourselves!!

#4 = “**Gentleness**” ... I think GENTLENESS is easier to define by DEFINING what it is NOT. It’s NOT HARSH or QUARRELSOME or HARD. Our God is GENTLE in that he still cares for us GENTLY even when we DESERVE to be CRUSHED. Listen to Titus 3:2 = <sup>2</sup> *They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.* <sup>4</sup> Clothe Yourselves!!

#5 = “**Patience**” ... Patience is VERY GODLY. Think of how GOD HOLDS HIS ANGER when it comes to YOU! How many times have YOU DISAPPOINTED GOD; YET, God keeps picking you up and dusting you off and saying, “TRY AGAIN!” God could EASILY and RIGHTFULLY DESTROYED His Creation (US) LONG AGO!

WE are to LIVE the SAME ... LONG ... DRAWN OUT ... PATIENCE with OTHER PEOPLE. Clothe Yourselves!!

WAIT! Paul’s NOT DONE YET! “Make **ALLOWANCE** for each other’s **FAULTS**... ***FORGIVE ANYONE who OFFENDS YOU!***”

Is anyone OFFENDING YOU RIGHT NOW ... our Bible says ... FORGIVE THEM! “But, Pastor Stan, you don’t know what they did! I HAVE A RIGHT TO BE OFFENDED!” You know what? YOUR RIGHTS DON’T MATTER to GOD! FORGIVE THEM!! Let them OFF of the HOOK! “But, Pastor Stan, IF I LET them OFF of the HOOK, they will be OFF of the HOOK!” YES!

What if GOD REFUSED to FORGIVE YOU when HE had a RIGHT TO BE OFFENDED?!? We FORGIVE, because GOD FORGIVES US!

Finally, CLOTHE YOURSELVES with LOVE. This is NOT the LOVE like we experience, for the most part, here on EARTH. This is the UNCONDITIONAL LOVE that JESUS SHOWED and SHARED ... and OFFERS to US through His HOLY SPIRIT!

What would the WORLD be LIKE if we just LOVED EACH OTHER ... No MATTER WHAT?!? Well, the BIBLE says that it would “BIND us together in PERFECT HARMONY”.

Let’s move to GALATIANS ... SIMILAR SITUATION ... PEOPLE in a CHURCH ... The people of Galatia are STRUGGLING with their NEWFOUND FAITH. There were JEWISH people in GALATIA that were trying to CONVINCED the new CHRISTIANS that because they were NOT living their FAITH the WAY it was lived in the OLD TESTAMENT, they were NOT being GODLY.

So, NOW, these NEW CHRISTIANS that Paul introduced to Christ were CONVINCED that they had to GO BACK to the OLD WAYS, OR, as they had been told, God would NOT ACCEPT them. **IOW, there were people in town telling them that if they didn’t do church like they did church back in the good old days, they were not acceptable by God.** They were PUSHING “CHURCHY” ... NOT “CHRIST-LIKE” ... “TRADITION” ... NOT TRANSFORMATION of LIVES!

Paul’s letter = We CAN’T EARN our way into God’s Kingdom by our ACTIONS, but ONLY by our HEARTS! Paul told them that to live by all the laws that the Jewish hierarchy had come up with ... to try to EARN IT, they were essentially SLAVES to THE LAW ... that’s NOT GOOD NEWS!

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Mt 23:12). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Tit 3:2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Paul taught that if they BELIEVED in JESUS and LIVED by the Holy Spirit, they would be RIGHT with God, would be right with the local laws and would experience freedom in this life. Here's what he says ... Galatians 5:13-15 = <sup>13</sup> *For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.* <sup>14</sup> *For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* <sup>15</sup> *But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.* <sup>5</sup>

SPEAKING of LIVING by RULES ... JOHN WESLEY came up with these 3 SIMPLE RULES to HELP PEOPLE CONTINUE to CLOTHE THEMSELVES with the WAYS of GOD!

Today ... Rule #1

## II. Rule #1: **"Do No Harm"**

The Galatians, like us, began their journey with Christ, determined to FOLLOW JESUS and KEEP their COMMITMENT to Him. BUT, their WORLD, like ours, was NOT ANY HELP when it came to FOLLOWING JESUS. The WORLD ... I don't know if you've noticed ... MAKES it VERY EASY to STRAY and DIFFICULT to STAY CLOSE to CHRIST!

IOW – It's HARD to KEEP our CLOTHES ON! Wait ... we'll get back to that on JANUARY 31<sup>st</sup> when we START our NEXT SERIES on RELATIONSHIPS!

ANYWAY ... So, Wesley came out with 3 RULES to live by that would HELP people be MORE WHO GOD WANTED them to be and LESS what the WORLD (sinful nature) was PUSHING for.

The first rule said, "DO NO HARM." This is not complicated, BUT if I agree to it, there are certain things I can no longer do: One of the MAIN THINGS that will TEAR APART UNITY in a CHURCH is GOSSIP!! Paul WROTE about it ALL OF THE TIME! You want to talk about ***"Always biting and devouring one another... destroying one another."*** ... NOTHING "BITES" MORE than GOSSIP!

Listen to what Paul writes to the Church in ROME ... Paul talks about all the things that are NOT GODLY / WICKED. After he LISTS a few things about HUMAN SEXUALITY, he goes on ... Romans 1:28-32 = <sup>28</sup> *Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done.* <sup>29</sup> *Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.* <sup>30</sup> *They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents.* <sup>31</sup> *They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy.* <sup>32</sup> *They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.* <sup>6</sup> Well, that's KIND of a DEPRESSING LIST of things that are NOT GODLY! Did you NOTICE the word that was right in the MIDDLE of all those WICKED / EVIL / UNGODLY things that Paul listed??

Yep. GOSSIP! GOSSIP is ranked right up there with MALICIOUS BEHAVIOR, HATE, GREED and MURDER! That's pretty SERIOUS STUFF! I wonder why SO MANY CHURCH-GOERS take it SO LIGHTLY!?

Gossip is DESTRUCTIVE in a church. As we think about UNITY ... NOTHING DESTROYS UNITY like GOSSIP. A UNIFIED Church is a POWERFUL MOVEMENT of PEOPLE for the KINGDOM. GOSSIP tears down UNITY and makes a CHURCH a POWERLESS MOVEMENT... You know why?? Because ***"As long as we are pointing fingers at each other, we will never point anyone to Jesus!"***

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ga 5:13-15). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>6</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (3rd ed., Ro 1:28-32). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

There are a lot of DEFINITIONS of GOSSIP out there like: “Idle Talk” or “Rumors” or “Unproven Information about Others”; BUT, I want to give a couple of CLEAR DEFINITIONS of GOSSIP so that NO ONE is CONFUSED.

GOSSIP IS: **#1 = Spreading Lies About Another Person**

Most of the time when someone talks BEHIND someone else’s BACK, they don’t even know if what they are saying is TRUE—and too many times it ISN’T! MOST of the TIME they are just REPEATING what they heard SOMEONE ELSE SAY without finding out if it’s TRUE! All they are doing is SPREADING an UNTRUTH!

That’s why I ask questions like: DID YOU HEAR it DIRECTLY from THAT PERSON? Do you KNOW that PERSON’S FULL CIRCUMSTANCES?!? If NOT, let’s assume that it is GOSSIP / EVIL / WICKEDNESS! STOP the GOSSIP RIGHT THERE!!

“So, as long as I’m SPREADING TRUTHS about that other person, it’s okay, RIGHT!?” Well, NOT so MUCH ... that takes us to our 2<sup>nd</sup> DEFINITION of GOSSIP:

**#2 = Discussing Someone’s Problems with Anyone Other than That Person**

Do I really NEED to EXPLAIN this?!? IF the PERSON being TALKED ABOUT NEGATIVELY is NOT IN the CONVERSATION; IT’S GOSSIP! NOT ROCKET SCIENCE!

If the person being talked about is NOT THERE ... STOP THE TALK! END IT!

Gossip hurts EVERYONE ... especially the GOSSIPER! Gossip PLANTS EVIL in our HEARTS. That WICKEDNESS starts to GROW where it is PLANTED and we become the person that God did NOT INTEND... King Solomon wrote about GOSSIP ... Proverbs 18:8 = <sup>8</sup> *Rumors are dainty morsels that sink deep into one’s heart.* <sup>7</sup> The EVIL of GOSSIP becomes a PART OF US. And, the MORE we GOSSIP, the MORE we are INFECTED by that EVIL!

And, don’t forget the FALLOUT ... If I hear you GOSSIPING, I’m going to WONDER what you are saying about me... RIGHT?!?

I’m AMAZED at how many people will CRINGE if anyone around them SWEARS ... uses a CURSE WORD (even from someone who does NOT know CHRIST); BUT, GOSSIP DOESN’T BOTHER THEM AT ALL! What we find out in our BIBLES is that GOSSIPERS are WICKED and EVIL and are standing on the BRINK of HELL ... it doesn’t say that about SWEARING! GOSSIP is of SATAN!

There are TWO things you can DO to PREVENT GOSSIP in our CHURCH:

**1) DON’T be a SOURCE of GOSSIP!** If you have ANY DOUBT that something is TRUE and/or that PERSON is NOT PRESENT; CONTROL YOUR TONGUE! Proverbs 12:23 = <sup>23</sup> *The wise don’t make a show of their knowledge, but fools broadcast their foolishness.* <sup>8</sup> KEEP your MOUTH SHUT and be BRILLIANT! BE WISE!

**2) If someone begins to SHARE GOSSIP with YOU or AROUND YOU, GENTLY and KINDLY STOP THEM.** You can be KIND ... and say, “I’d rather NOT HEAR any GOSSIP and I really HOPE that this GOSSIP does NOT CONTINUE to SPREAD.” (Repeat) YOU STOP THEM! Because they are PART of the BODY of CHRIST!

If we don’t END GOSSIP in our CHURCHES; we WON’T BE CHURCH!

### III. Three Reasons We Will Not Agree To “Do No Harm”

WE all have stuff INSIDE us that FIGHTS the WISDOM of CHRIST ... our BIBLES...

**#1 = It demands too much in the way of self-discipline and deep faith**

Try NOT GOSSIPING! Like, for a DAY! Go to WORK tomorrow and VOW NOT to GOSSIP or GET CAUGHT UP in GOSSIP! It’s HARD!!

<sup>7</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (3rd ed., Pr 18:8). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (3rd ed., Pr 12:23). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

It takes SELF-DISCIPLINE ... including an AWARENESS about the THINGS being SAID that NO ONE ELSE in the ROOM is AWARE OF! **For our CULTURE, GOSSIP is the NORM!!** If you are going to be ABNORMAL when it comes to GOSSIP and CRITICISM, it will be VERY HARD and take GREAT SELF-DISCIPLINE. It is MUCH EASIER to just GO ALONG with the CROWD!

Do you TRUST GOD to CARRY YOU when you SPEAK UP about REFUSING to GOSSIP?! You might be SHUNNED by your FRIENDS, FAMILY and CO-WORKERS... They will STOP TALKING around YOU ALTOGETHER!

It's difficult to have a radical trust in God's power and wisdom! It's DIFFICULT to be OBEDIENT to GOD'S WAYS when it GETS REAL with PEOPLE that we CARE ABOUT!

**#2 = We are set in our ways!** We are too bound to our own ideas or beliefs in who Christ is that we will not listen to others or even Scripture. We are MORE willing to GIVE UP what we CLAIM to BELIEVE IN, than we are to CHANGE our BEHAVIORS! Even when it COMES to GOSSIP and SLANDER that the BIBLE is CLEAR ABOUT ... our HABITS OVERTAKE US! I would rather CONTINUE my CULTURALLY ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS (Gossip ... Critical Heart) than to CHANGE my BEHAVIORS to MATCH what I say I BELIEVE!

**#3 = We are afraid of the Consequences**

WHAT will people SAY?? What will they DO to ME?? If I make a STAND and QUIT HARMING OTHER PEOPLE ... HOW will I be TREATED?!!

NEXT STEP = Read Colossians and/or Galatians this week ... AT LEAST read Colossians 3 and Galatians 5...

See if this SOUNDS FAMILIAR ... John Kvigne last week ... Galatians 5:16-18 = <sup>16</sup> *So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.* <sup>17</sup> *The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.* <sup>18</sup> *But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.* <sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, in our world ... the SINFUL NATURE is what is POPULARIZED ... it's KILLED our CULTURE ... YET, it is POPULAR and PUSHED (ever watch TV?)!!

#### **IV. To Do No Harm is a Proactive Response to Evil**

To REFUSE to HARM OTHER PEOPLE is what we call GOING FIRST! "I'm not going first. You go first!" NOT HARMING OTHER PEOPLE ... BIBLICALLY ... is an ACTION; NOT a REACTION! We go 1<sup>st</sup>!

Remember, LOVE is a CHOICE ... NOT a FEELING!

To "DO NO HARM" is the FIRST STEP in CLOTHING OURSELVES and CHANGING the WORLD around us in 2016 for Jesus Christ!

Let's Pray!

OFFERING: See BELOW...

Next Steps: *I will memorize Colossians 3:12-14*  
*I will read Colossians and/or Galatians this week.*  
*I will take next steps to GROW in my FAITH in 2016*  
*I will attempt to not harm anyone this week*