



January 10, 2024
A Note from Nikki Buskirk

Dear Friends,

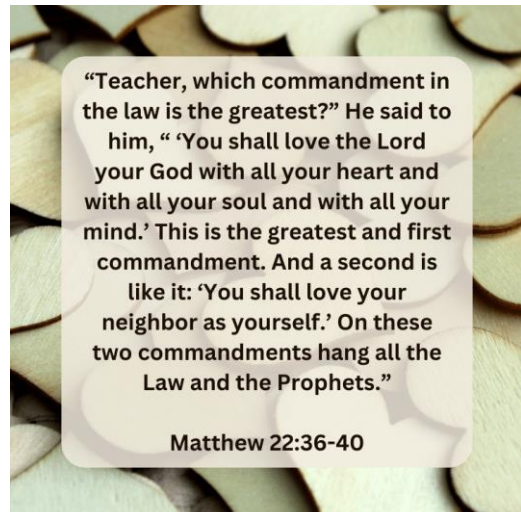
“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40)

When the Faith Finders group first started (for kids in grades 3-6) in February 2020 (<https://hilliardumc.org/children-weekday-evenings/>), I didn’t really have an idea of what the group would be. I had visited several youth groups including our own to get a feel for what a group like this could look like. I talked to several youth leaders, trying to get an idea of what teens were learning. I had a lot of information to sit with — so much so that I was very overwhelmed. One of the bright sides of being under lockdown during the pandemic was it gave me time to really sit and think about what the needs were for this age group’s spiritual journeys.

These kids already had two years of Godly Play under their belts, which laid the foundation for who they believed God was and that God absolutely loved them... no matter what.

They understood loving God and loving themselves, but what about loving your neighbors? Who were their neighbors? What does loving your neighbors look like? (<https://hilliardumc.org/grow/children/sunday-mornings/>)

John Wesley said it best: “There’s no holiness but social holiness.”



John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was a strong believer in taking care of those around you from different communities. He was very much a love-in-action person.



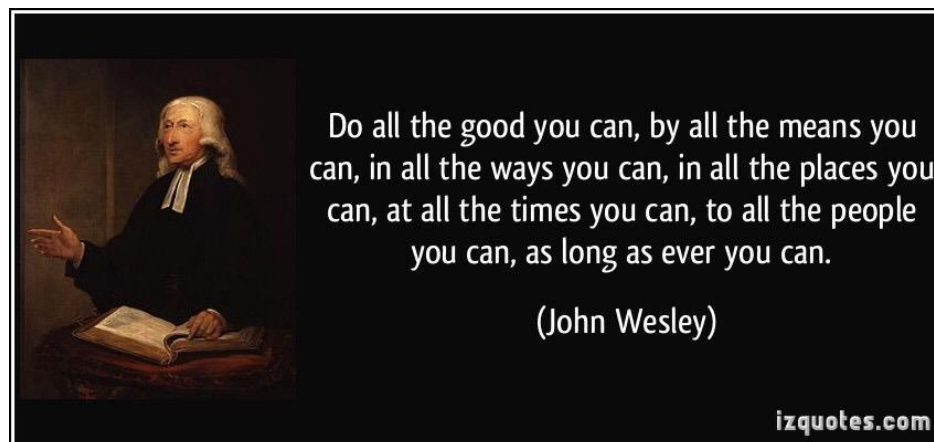
I try to bring that to the Faith Finders by introducing them to local marginalized communities that they may not interact with otherwise. **Every year, starting in January, the Faith Finders start our Loving Your Neighbors series.**

Each month the kids learn about a community that is often harmed by society. These communities often include people who are from different races and ethnicities, different religions, and the LGBTQIA+ community.

They first get a brief lesson about that specific community. That lesson includes history, culture, traditions, and the harms that they face. Next the kids then get to meet a person who is a part of that community. This is done in an interview style that ends with the children being able to ask questions. From there the children then participate in an outreach project that centers that specific community.

This year the Faith Finders will be learning about and meeting people from the Black community, the Muslim community, and the LGBTQIA+ community, specifically the I in LGBTQIA+.

I'm very excited for them to meet and get to know these neighbors. **By meeting people from these other communities, my hope is that these children broaden their understanding of the word neighbor, that they welcome these different groups to their social circles and consider these groups' struggles as they start to build the future.**



I'm reminded of another quote by John Wesley that truly holds what the Faith Finders walk away with: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

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