

“The Heart of the Matter”

Drive through most rural areas and you’re sure to see Folk Art. In fact, pieces from this artistic genre have become so popular that you’ll see them hanging in urban and suburban galleries, too. The bright colors and uncomplicated style make it easily recognizable.

Historically, Folk Art has reflected the traditions and values of groups or populations of people—whether socioeconomic, religious, geographical, race or gender related. These pieces are generally produced by people with little or no artistic training. For these, it has, and continues to be, an authentic representation of the life and times of regular ordinary people just like you and me.

Folk Artists get to the point of what they are trying to communicate. The meaning behind the art is usually authentic and genuine. Some might say that Folk Art gets right to “the heart of the matter.”

John Wesley, father of the Methodist movement, wasn’t a folk artist, but he may have had the spirit of one. Wesley’s passionate beliefs on religion, the Church, and reaching the un-churched were authentic and genuine—and most certainly got right to the heart of the matter. His medium was the spoken and written word rather than canvas and paint.

In his publication simply titled *General Rules*, Wesley paints for his readers three faithful practices that celebrate the heart of the matter—to love God and love one another by doing no harm; doing good; and staying in love with God, or in his original words, attending all the ordinances of God. Wesley noted that being faithful to these rules was a true mark of a Methodist.

Not only does our Wesleyan heritage teach us the importance of the heart of the matter, but our Christian heritage does as well. Matthew 22:38 teaches us that loving God is the greatest commandment of all. Through John 13:34, Jesus reminds us of his new commandment: to love another as He has first loved us.

Through Jesus Christ we find that the heart of the matter is a matter of the heart.

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“Do no harm, do good,
and stay in love with God”

—John Wesley

Prayers for June 2008

The Heart of the Matter • Prayers for June 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 God, support me in my efforts to do good, do no harm and stay in love with you. Matthew 22:38	2 God, when I have a question of what's right and wrong remind me that your greatest commandment is to love one another. John 13:34	3 God, when I struggle, remind me that doing good is a simple rule, but it is not always easy. Luke 12:48	4 God, I pray that you will keep your Word in my heart. Do not let me slip. Psalm 37:31	5 God, show me an opportunity to offer hospitality to someone in need. Hebrews 13:2	6 God, help my church be a place that connects members and visitors with Christ's love. Colossians 1:17	7 God, where I see places for improvement in this world, make me an agent of change. Matthew 17:20
8 God, when I struggle and want to give up, remind me that you are the strength of my heart. Psalm 73:26	9 God, stop me from being self-centered and instead be self-giving and centered on Christ. Colossians 2:6-7	10 God, help me not to give blindly, but to truly engage in ministries with the poor. Deuteronomy 15:11	11 God, lead me to acknowledge and take heart that you are the Lord of heaven and of earth. Deuteronomy 4:39	12 God, give me integrity and loyalty and help me fully commit myself to doing good. Matthew 19:17	13 God, open my eyes to people who are suffering, to people no one else seems to notice. 1 Peter 4:9	14 God, replace my judgmental and arrogant thoughts with empathy and understanding. Luke 6:37
15 God, may my prayers, my presence, my gifts, my service and my witness benefit my church and community. James 1:17	16 God, make me sensitive and responsive to the needs of my family, friends and church members so that I do no harm. Psalm 34:14	17 God, when I am embarrassed or upset with myself, don't let me take it out on people around me. Romans 8:28	18 God, clear my heart and my mind so that I may love you with all my heart and all my soul and all my strength. Deuteronomy 6:5	19 God, work with me and guide me to turn my mistakes into good. Genesis 50:20	20 God, as I am pulled in every direction, help me stay centered on the heart of the matter. 2 Chronicles 20:12	21 God, guide me down the path that leads to the joy of deepening my love for you. Isaiah 12:3
22 God, please do not let my ignorance and short-sightedness harm others. Acts 3:19	23 God, when relationships seem complicated, remind me to follow Christ's example: love one another. 1 John 4:7	24 God, help me follow Wesley's three simple rules when it comes to caring for my family. Hebrews 13:7	25 God, as I struggle to put less value on possessions, make me rich in kindness, generosity and love. Matthew 6:21	26 God, make my words—both written and spoken—clear, honest, considerate and sincere. Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7	27 God, empower me to raise my voice when I see injustice. Romans 8:26	28 God, give me the heart of an artist. Teach me creative ways to communicate your love to others. James 2:18
29 God, create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:10	30 God, teach me to do good, to say no to wrong and to stand up for what's right. Genesis 4:7					 www.ngumc.org