

Rules For Life

According to Jesus

© Copyright, 2021

The Holy Bible, New Living Translation (NLT), copyright
©1996, 2004, 2007.

Unless noted otherwise, all Bible quotes will be using the
NLT version.

Your servant in Christ

Gary Wentz

Introduction

This little book is intended to help the reader see what Jesus commanded His followers to do — how we should live out our lives and our faith.

We know that Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses. “For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.” (Romans 10:4)

So we’re not going to get into the Law of Moses so much — just the Ten Commandments, which are a part of the Law. Living by the Ten Commandments is good but it does nothing to make us right with God. Rather, we are going to focus on the things that Jesus commanded us to do. We will only touch on the Ten Commandments and how Jesus taught us concerning them.

You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires. (Colossians 2:20-23)

Does this nullify the Law of Moses or the Ten Commandments? No. Because the Law remains to show us that we cannot possibly fulfill the Law the way that Jesus

did (perfectly). It still stands as a standard that no one can live up to; therefore, every human ever conceived needs the sacrificial atonement of Jesus on the cross to make him/her “right” with God. Besides, Jesus went beyond the letter of the Law into the heart of the issue.

I have seen where as many as 120 commands of Jesus are gleaned from the Gospels. But here we will only look at 33 that have to do with living a righteous life. I mean, “Go get a mule” may have been a command of His, but we’re not looking at every little thing that He commanded.

If the reader wants to be truly blessed by Jesus in this lifetime, it becomes very important to live out the teachings (the commands) of our Savior on a daily, constant basis — not just once in a while. The teachings that we will look at here will be necessary for living a life that Jesus will honor. And when Jesus honors our lives, really good things happen — such as growing more like Him and closer to the Father and experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit.

This will be a quick study, so fasten your seatbelt and let’s take off into the lifestyle that beckons to us, for the glory of Jesus, our blessed Savior, His Father, and their Holy Spirit. For, it is this God — and this God only — Who gives us a life of love, faith, hope, and true spiritual power.

In Him, I pray that you will be truly blessed as you live life according to the rules of Jesus. “For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” ~ Jesus
(Matthew 11:30)

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Repent	2
Chapter 2: Be Born Again	4
Chapter 3: Place God First.....	6
Chapter 4: Love and Serve One Another.....	8
Chapter 5: Live By Faith	10
Chapter 6: Forgive Others	12
Chapter 7: Remain in Jesus	14
Chapter 8: Live Righteously Before Men	16
Chapter 9: Avoid Bad Influences.....	18
Chapter 10: Stay On The Narrow Path	20
Chapter 11: Do Not Return Evil With Evil	22
Chapter 12: Give More Than Is Demanded.....	24
Chapter 13: Love Your Enemies	26
Chapter 14: Check Your Motives	28
Chapter 15: Pray Simply	30
Chapter 16: Do Not Worry.....	32
Chapter 17: Store Up Treasures In Heaven.....	34
Chapter 18: Do Not Be Judgmental.....	36
Chapter 19: Guard what is Sacred	38
Chapter 20: Care For Those In Distress	40

Chapter 21: Do Not Swear Oaths.....	42
Chapter 22: Watch out for false prophets	44
Chapter 23: Exercise Spiritual Power	46
Chapter 24: Have Childlike Faith.....	48
Chapter 25: Do Not Exalt Yourself.....	50
Chapter 26: Settle Disputes Quickly	52
Chapter 27: Settle Disputes Between Believers	54
Chapter 28: Do not Oppose Brethren.....	56
Chapter 29: Remember Me.....	58
Chapter 30: Be Merciful	60
Chapter 31: Make Disciples.....	62
Chapter 32: Be Ready	64
Chapter 33: Obey Jesus' Commands	66
Closing Comments	68

Chapter 1: Repent

“The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!” (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17)

Jesus answered them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.” (Luke 5:31-32)

About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. “Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?” Jesus asked. “Is that why they suffered? Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God. And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem? No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too.” (Luke 13:1-5)

To repent is to feel emotional pain, sorrow, or regret for something one has done or left undone. It’s an agreement in the heart that you are imperfect and require correction on God’s terms. And I would argue that it is to acknowledge that you cannot atone for your evil heart through your own effort, but that you must agree that Jesus alone can pay (and has paid) the penalty for your sins in the eyes of God.

We people must admit that we have inherited a corrupt nature from our parents, who got it from their parents, and so on, throughout the entire human race. If you are being honest with yourself and God, you must admit that you are imperfect and that this condition leads you into sin.

For those who believe that they have kept the Ten Commandments, Jesus took those commands to the next level in His Sermon on the Mount (which will be covered in later chapters). Basically, He let everyone know that merely refraining from committing those sins is not enough. He made it known that one must not desire to do those things in the heart.

Therefore, *everyone* is guilty before God and needs to turn from (repent of) their evil ways and seek God's forgiveness.

This is how Jesus began His earthly ministry at the age of 30. He knew that it was imperative that people wake up to the fact that they are not perfect, and that they all need His intervention with the Creator. Interestingly, we learn later that Jesus is the Creator in human form. Everyone needs to change their behavior and attitudes in all areas of life.

So this first commandment of Jesus is to stop pretending that you're perfect. Be sorry about how you think, feel, act, and speak. Realize that you cannot ever be perfect before God, but that you can at least try to be.

If this becomes your new attitude (one of gratitude and repentance) then you will be living out Jesus' first commandment. You will be taking the first step toward peace with God and life everlasting.

Chapter 2: Be Born Again

Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You [*plural*] must be born again.'" (John 3:5-7)

As important as repentance is, it isn't enough to get right with God. We must also be *born of the Spirit of God*. But what does this mean? The man He told this to at the time didn't get it at first (even though he was a priest), and a lot of people today don't get it either.

Is He speaking literally (physically)? No, not hardly. Rather, He is speaking of a spiritual transformation that miraculously happens when God, the Father, gives a person the gift of faith in what Jesus did for us (die on the cross). Something that no one who ever lived could do by any means (because only Jesus never sinned and His death was attributed to all those who did sin, and accept it).

Here is how it works: God gives the gift of faith; the person receives it realizing that he/she could never be "good enough" through any effort of their own to satisfy God's demand of perfection in us (imperfect humans); the person then gives their life over to Jesus for Him to rule over. That's when the teachings of this book begin to kick in.

Unless a person accepts the free gift of God for their reconciliation with the Creator, nothing else in this collection will do them any good toward their eternal

Rules For Life According To Jesus

destiny. Oh sure, one could follow these instructions and be a really “good” person, but they will not be good enough to satisfy God’s standard of perfection. We don’t depend on *our* goodness to save us; we depend on *Jesus’* goodness to save us. And this comes to us by believing that His work is sufficient to do that (and that we need it). And that gift of believing is not even something that we can conjure up on our own; it has to be imparted (given) to us by the Father.

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

That, in a nutshell, is what we call “The Gospel”, which means “Good News”. The good news is that all of the requirements of literally every religion known to man are null and void in making us “right” with God. Whatever good things one can find in any religion (and there are many) none of them will ever accomplish that one, crucial thing. It is only through our repentance (a change of heart) and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that we can be made right with God.

This takes all human effort out of the equation of being reconciled with God. Repentance is more of an attitude than an effort. It isn’t something done, literally, just felt.

It is this commandment from Jesus that removes all religion from having any legitimacy in the eyes of God. And if someone tries to turn Christianity (the message of the cross) into a religion, then they have missed the point altogether. Jesus did what no one else (you) could ever do.

Chapter 3: Place God First

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.”
(Matthew 6:33)

This is pretty much the same thing as what God has said from the beginning:

The First of the Ten Commandments:

“Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Jesus said it elsewhere also: One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”
(Mark 12:28-31)

When Jesus taught on the Ten Commandments, He took them to another level. He addressed the (fallen) condition of the human heart; not merely our outward actions or words. So really, Jesus went beyond the Ten Commands, as written, and went straight to the heart of sin in us—our own wicked hearts.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

Also, Notice how this command comes with a promise: Seek God above all other things (and people) and He will reward you with the things that you need.

When Jesus said this to His disciples, He told them this:

“Yes,” Jesus replied, “and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30)

(And sorry, this promise doesn't apply to “losing” spouses or in-laws—just kidding.)

Jesus wants us to act like He acted while on Earth.

So Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.” (John 5:19)

So if we love Jesus and the Father and live as Jesus lived, we will be making great strides in our journey to live out a life of victory over sin in our lives. We will automatically bless others. We may not get all of the shiny things that Earth has to offer, we may not wish all of our problems away, but we will care less about such things and more about heavenly things. And that's what Jesus is looking for from us, and in us. Put God first—always, in all things.

Chapter 4: Love and Serve One Another

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.”
(John 13:34)

“This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

When Jesus says something more than once, He must really mean it.

Of course, we just saw how He said to love God with all that we are. Now He is basically saying to do the same with the people in our lives, or at least love them as much as we love ourselves.

Why is love such a big thing with God? I think it’s because true love tends to keep us from doing wrong in other areas of life.

Paul unpacked this for us in one of his letters. Here’s what he wrote about love to those in Corinth:

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.
(1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Rules For Life According To Jesus

So you can see how important it is to love people with a pure heart. Doing so helps to keep you straight in many other areas of your life.

Peter told us, “Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.”
(1 Peter 4:8)

Loving God more than anyone else is important because if we really love Him we won't want to go against His wishes for us (and break His commands). And loving others is important because we will act in a manner that brings us together, instead of tearing us apart. We will help each other, not hurt each other; we will build up, not tear down.

Love is a responsibility, not a feeling. It's a verb. It requires action. What's the “Golden Rule”? Love others as much as you love yourself. This doesn't mean that you have to have mushy feelings for everyone — that isn't practical — it means to act toward others the way that Paul said love acts.

If people would follow just this one command, the world would be a much, much better place.

Jesus also said, ““If you love me, obey my commandments.”
(John 14:15) So love brings with it obedience to God, Just as I already mentioned.

Love and serve one another. It's a commandment from the Creator of life—Jesus.

Chapter 5: Live By Faith

Then Jesus said to the disciples, “Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you’ve received it, it will be yours. But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too. But if you refuse to forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins.” (Mark 11:22-26)

This is very interesting. Not only does faith work to save you (make you right with God), but it also has power in your life to do amazing things—things like Jesus did when He walked the Earth. And lest you think that He was only talking about His apostles, read this one:

“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works...”
(John 14:12)

Did you catch the part where He said, “**anyone** who believes in me”? This means that if you believe in Jesus for your salvation, you can also believe that He will empower you to do “even greater works” than He did. Amazing.

Of course, one catch is that you must believe and not doubt (I would add, even a little bit). Another catch is that you cannot carry a grudge against anyone else.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

Consider His apostle Peter. Peter was the only other person recorded as having walked on water. It may have only been a few quick steps, but he did it. And what did Jesus say to him after he began to sink into the water? “You have so little faith.” (Matthew 14:31)

I think that it is extremely difficult for us (especially adults) living in this modern world of medicine and science to believe whole-heartedly in the power of miracles. But that is exactly what the promise of Jesus is, if we believe and do not doubt.

It is interesting to add that Jesus didn't pray that God would heal infirmities, raise the dead, cast out demons, and all of the other amazing works He did; He simply did them by faith. But I should also add that He had the help of the Holy Spirit, Who was upon Him since His baptism. But He didn't doubt, and He didn't have any grudges against anyone.

I know that it takes practice to “hear” the quiet voice of God in our minds. And I also know from personal experience (just recently, actually), that the Holy Spirit can and does “come upon” believers for specific reasons. But that's another story for another time. For now, the important message is that Jesus will do anything for anyone who believes in Him, as long as they have enough faith and a clear conscience toward others.

I should also add that just like Jesus, we might simply make these things happen with the right amount of faith and the right motives (see James 4:3), without praying, just doing.

Faith. It's something to really LIVE by.

Chapter 6: Forgive Others

“I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you’ve received it, it will be yours. But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too. But if you refuse to forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins.” (Mark 11:22-26)

No, I’m not losing it. This passage of scripture is repeated because Jesus had a bit more to say about this.

Picking up where we just left off, we can see that holding a grudge is a big deal with God. Not only does it stifle your faith power (as just discussed), but it also puts you in danger of condemnation from God!

Jesus talked a lot about forgiveness. Maybe because it ties in with something else that is very near and dear to His heart: Love.

Let’s look at a few other verses about forgiveness.

“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14)

“If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive.” (Luke 17:3-4)

Rules For Life According To Jesus

Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!" (Matthew 18:21-22)

Did Jesus just contradict Himself? No. Like so many other messages in scripture, He wasn't speaking literally when He gave either of these numbers (7 or 70 x 7); He was just giving the idea that we need to forgive as often as the person who sinned against us repents.

And isn't this comforting? because what He is really doing is showing us the heart of God. No matter how many times we sin against God, He is faithful to forgive us when we confess and repent (1 John 1:9). At the same time, this is a bit concerning because God will clearly hold us to account for our sins if we don't forgive others of their confessed and repented sins against us!

Can you see how Jesus is leading you to have a clean heart? He even demands it of you. After all, this is a command of His to us—forgive others.

When we fail (refuse) to forgive, it begins to weigh heavily upon our soul, like a heavy weight that has been placed around the neck or upon the back. We can even begin to suffer physically as a result of not forgiving others. But when we do forgive, all of that weight is lifted and we can again go through life with the joy and peace that we so desperately desire.

The command is to forgive others—for their sake and for yours!

Chapter 7: Remain in Jesus

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.” (John 15:1-4)

Here, Jesus uses a grapevine to compare our relationship with Him. Just as the grapevine provides life to the branches, which produce the grapes, so God gives us power and life to produce fruit for Him through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

“If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate [or Comforter, or Encourager, or Counselor. Greek reads Paraclete], who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans — I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love

Rules For Life According To Jesus

them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.” (John 14:15-21)

When you ask Jesus into your heart and He becomes your Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit lives in you, and you in Him. And this is not just for the men who followed Jesus throughout Israel in the first century; it’s for all of His followers ever since. Here is how we know this:

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.” (John 17:20-21)

So, in these few passages, we’ve seen that when we become believers, Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit all become one with us and we become one with each other. This is what the Kingdom of God is all about: unity and love.

To remain in Jesus is to follow His commands, so that we may produce much fruit in our lives for God’s glory. What is the fruit? Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians:

“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!” (Galatians 5:22-23)

Other kinds of fruit could be the miraculous deeds that are possible through Him, and helping others come to saving faith in Him. For this to happen, all we need do is remain in Him and follow His commandments.

Chapter 8: Live Righteously Before Men

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” (Matthew 5:13-16)

If you (as a believer in Christ) are not living out your faith in Him before others; if you are not holding firm to His commands and displaying them for all to see; if you join in with others who are living in sin; if you act no differently than anyone who does not have Christ living in them, then you are no representative of His on Earth. You are the kind of “salt” that is only good for being trampled on in the snow. Your light of Christ is hidden and does no one any good at all. And this dark world needs His light.

With that put out there, notice that He commands righteousness, not self-piety. He wants you to be genuinely good and not someone who goes around condemning others. Displaying Christ’s righteousness is very different from displaying your own self-righteousness.

The righteousness that Christ wants us to display is the kind that is born out of love. Remember what Paul said about love?

Rules For Life According To Jesus

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.”
(1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

THIS is what Jesus means when He says to let your righteousness shine before men.

Paul had a similar message to the believers in Galatia:

“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.” (Galatians 5:19-26)

I would add to not be gossiping, condemning, or judging. Let the true light shine — the light of **love**.

Chapter 9: Avoid Bad Influences

“You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your hand—even your stronger hand—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.” (Matt 5:27-30)

Do you think that Jesus is promoting self-mutilation here? I don't think so. I think that He is telling us to remove those things in our life—however much it may hurt—that cause us to sin. Computer causing you to see things you ought not see? Toss it in the trash (or disconnect from the internet, if you can't control yourself). Cable channel causing you to sin? Disconnect from the service, or develop some self-control and avoid images and programs that stir lust or other harmful feelings within you. Getting all worked up about politics? Beginning to hate the “other party”? Lay off the news for a while, until your peace returns to you.

This isn't all that complicated; any child can understand that if something is a bad influence on you, toss it out.

Got a toxic relationship? Be careful here—is it a parent, a sibling, or a spouse? Not all relationships can be easily ended. However, I think that Jesus is clearly showing us how important it is to remedy the toxic situation. And make

Rules For Life According To Jesus

sure that you aren't the toxic one. What did Paul say about bad relationships with friends?

“Bad company corrupts good character.” Think carefully about what is right, and stop sinning.
(1 Corinthians 15:33-34, partial quote)

Well, it may be difficult to remove all evil influences in our lives. After all, we are living in a fallen world. In fact, removing all evil around us is impossible. But for those things that we have control over, we must remove those things that cause us to sin.

Addiction: You know when you have it. You may not admit it, but when something calls to you day after day you need to take a long, hard look at what it is doing to you. Over eating, getting drunk, getting high, needing more and more and more of anything that would normally be “good” ... you know what I'm talking about. Get help if you must. Get away from friends or family that lure you into bad situations that aren't good for you. If you want victory in your life over harmful things, you **MUST** get free!

One bad influence in the world is the enemy of man—the devil (Satan) and his demonic horde. Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Don't give the devil a foothold in your life. (Eph. 4) Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. (James 4)

Chapter 10: Stay On The Narrow Path

“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to destruction is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14)

Opponents of Jesus and His followers accuse us of being “narrow minded”, as if that’s a bad thing. However, He is not talking about narrow thinking; He is talking about something much broader than that. In fact, this topic can be so broad that most people in the world don’t have a clue what He means.

He is talking about getting right with God here. And that’s why the world doesn’t understand. There is only one path (a narrow one) that leads to everlasting life. If there were any other path, then why would Jesus have to suffer a horrible death for us?

Jesus said of Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

Peter said, “There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

And if you think that God is some Holly-Jolly giant who will forgive everyone no matter what, think again. If you think that you are a good person and He has no grounds for

Rules For Life According To Jesus

sending you away from His holy presence for all eternity, consider this: He told us through His prophet Isaiah that man's "goodness" is about as clean to Him as a used tampon. Here's how He really said it: "We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6) The "rags" he's talking about are menstrual rags.

So, if you approach God with some sort of religious activity to show how pious you are, it isn't going to work. This one verse in the Bible truly eliminates every single religion ever known to man that depends on human effort (which is a very broad road). And "Christians" aren't exempt from taking the wrong path either (surprise, surprise).

"Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ." (Galatians 3:1-5)

Faith in Christ is the narrow path; not human effort. Yet the vast majority of humankind thinks differently. So sad.

Chapter 11: Do Not Return Evil With Evil

“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say, do not resist an evil person!”
(Matthew 5:38-39)

In chapter 6, we learned about forgiving others who repent and ask for forgiveness. Here, we look at those who do not repent. This is about someone who hurts you and doesn’t care. Thieves, robbers, murderers, rapists...it’s a long list. And anyone can become a victim at any time.

So what do we do? We go on living out our lives in peace, love, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control...you know, the stuff you’ve seen already in this little study.

What we do NOT do is take vengeance. Why not? Uh, Jesus commands it. And that’s reason enough for me. Is it easy? Not even a little bit. Is it doable? With much prayer and humility anything can be possible—even this.

“Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:17-18)

Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing. For the Scriptures say,

Rules For Life According To Jesus

“If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it. The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil.”
(1 Peter 3:8-12)

There is no justification in doing evil, whatever the motive may be. If someone is evil toward you, that's on them; if you are evil toward someone else, that's on you!

While keeping out of trouble with God might motivate you, perhaps this will convict you: Shining the light of God in a dark world will inspire others to seek the light. Here's what I mean: When people see you acting in an honorable, noble fashion, it makes them see you as one who is really good. They might want to be like you and follow Jesus too.

With all of that put out there, let me just add this: Self-defense is different than going after someone who has done you wrong. If you are being attacked by one or more people seeking to do you harm, you have the God-given right to defend yourself or others.

Lastly, in our modern society we have the court system. Using it is not a sin, so long as you have a valid case. But in all things, rise above hatred, vengeance, and wrongdoing. God is calling you to more righteous living than that.

Glorify God and show His mercy where mercy can be shown. It is a command of our Lord and Savior.

Chapter 12: Give More Than Is Demanded

“If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles.”
(Matthew 5:40-41)

So, we just looked into the previous Bible passage, which is very similar to this one. In Chapter 11, I said you could defend yourself or someone else. That remains true. This passage is a bit different than needing to defend yourself. It's about someone who has a gripe with you. They feel like you've wronged them or gotten out of line and they're taking action to correct you or get recompense.

Usually, people get offended for a somewhat valid reason (“Social Justice Warriors” notwithstanding). It's up to us to evaluate our actions and see if the complaint against us is legitimate. But even if the gripe is not legitimate, you should still follow this commandment.

What I think that the Lord is teaching us here is to make amends with the ones we've wronged. Go a bit farther than what is required for recompense. Doing this will put the whole matter to bed much more quickly than not doing it. Whoever has this issue with you, whatever it may be, will be quicker to let it go if you go above and beyond what they are demanding for payment.

Such behavior on your part will show the other party, and anyone else who is watching, that you are a noble and

Rules For Life According To Jesus

righteous person and are willing to pay your debts and to do the right thing when you have wronged someone (hopefully by mistake).

“Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law.” (Romans 13:8)

Remember, Jesus’ commands are there to teach us godliness. They are to raise us up to a higher level than what our human nature wants us to do. We must keep this in mind as we study being Christ-like.

Rather than living as one who lashes out against accusers, learn to rise above their base behavior (if any). Show compassion to them in every way. Pray for them. Show kindness and be patient with them. If you can win someone over to Christ merely by parting with some material possessions or money, you have struck a bargain. Keep the big picture before your mind’s eye at all times.

The pettiness of squabbling over material things is just that: Petty. As followers of Christ, He is calling us to be better than those who care about such temporary things. We should be focused on what really matters: Things of the Spirit.

We never really got to see Jesus act this out in person. The reason is that He never gave anyone a reason to have a valid complaint against Him. What we DID see is religious fanatics slapping Him for their own petty reasons. They had no demands of repayment, but when they slapped and hit Him, He just stood there and took it. Wow. What resolve!

Chapter 13: Love Your Enemies

“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:43-48)

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son *while we were still his enemies*, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. (Romans 5:6-11)

Basically, Paul is saying that Jesus died for you and me while we were still enemies of God. So with this command, Jesus is telling us to do what He was going to do for us. And

Rules For Life According To Jesus

remember that Jesus said that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for others (John 15:13). And that's what He did.

If we follow this command—and by the way, this kind of love, *Agapēseis*, is the same kind of love that God has for us (unconditional, perfect)—then we might just save our enemies from eternal damnation, if that's where they are headed. Jesus is always looking to the bigger picture (salvation).

And Paul went on to tell us who our real enemies are:

“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

So people aren't even our enemies, according to the Bible; Satan and his evil minions are.

This radical departure from human thinking is nothing short of life transforming. And it fits with something else that Paul said: *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.* (Romans 12:2)

See how all of this just comes together for us? Is it easy to love your enemies? If you consider people your enemies, then yes, it could be. Do we love demons? No, not really. Jesus was talking about people, not evil spirits.

Chapter 14: Check Your Motives

“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:16-18)

Some things are meant to be kept between you and your God. In chapter 8, we looked at letting your light shine; here, we are looking at not making a spectacle of yourself so that others will admire you. It’s all about the motives of your heart.

Can you tell others that you are fasting? Why are you telling them? Is it to get some kind of recognition from them about how holy you are? If so, that’s not good. Is it to encourage them to do the same, or not tempt you with food, or to pray for you? That’s probably fine. Jesus always cares about the condition of the heart.

When our motive is to encourage and lift up others in love, that’s a good motive. You could probably do just about anything with that kind of motive behind it.

When our motive is to puff up the ego of self or others, that’s never a good motive. We should never go about acting in that manner.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

This commandment of Jesus is again to get us to think about why we're doing what we're doing. It's to get us to act like He acted.

Is fasting a good thing? Is giving to the poor a good thing? What about praying, is that good? Of course, all of these things are good. But they can all be corrupted and become useless if they are done in the wrong manner, with the wrong motives behind them.

We could use a bit more modern vernacular and say that being a "poser" is what Jesus is referring to here. If we pretend to be righteous, we will make sure that other people observe our acts of "righteousness". But if we are being genuine, we don't care what anyone else thinks about our devotion to God—only what God thinks about it. And clearly, He cares about the motive in our heart.

So the commandment here is to check your motives, so that your acts of service, praise, or worship don't get burned up in the furnace of God's motive checker.

"On the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames."
(1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

Store up treasures in heaven, with a pure heart, and check your motives.

Chapter 15: Pray Simply

“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the [pagans] do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this:

“Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. [Some manuscripts add: For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]” (Matthew 6:7-13)

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.” (Matthew 7:7-11)

If you are asking God for something and He doesn’t give it to you, there are a few things to consider:

1. We just looked at your motives in chapter 14. Don’t forget that one. (See James 4)
2. Is it something that God would want you to have?

Rules For Life According To Jesus

Winning the Lotto might seem like a good idea, but not everyone can handle that kind of wealth. Many winners end up having their lives ruined. Whenever we pray, it must be according to God's will. That's what Jesus means when He says, "Whatever you ask for *in my name*..." (John 14).

3. Do you have an unresolved problem with someone else? If you are harboring a grudge, God won't listen (see chapters 5 and 6). Likewise, if you are mistreating your spouse, He won't listen. Peter said, "Treat [your wife] as you should so your prayers will not be hindered." (1 Peter 3:7)

4. Confess your sins to God; don't try to hide them from Him, as if He can't see them anyway. If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (1 John 1:8-9) I think that this would apply to your prayers as well, whether they are answered or not.

5. Do you consider God to be a kind of ATM? Ask for money and you get it? Sometimes this is fine, when all of the other factors are present (the other items in this list).

6. Don't even begin to curse someone in your prayers, that will only anger God at you. "...if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell..." (Mathew 5:22)

I'm sure that there are many other things that will hinder your prayers; this list is just off the top of my head. Also, situations might be different from person to person or from time to time: God might give one thing to someone and not to another—it's His call; He might answer it tomorrow, but not today. And no matter what, the answer might simply be "No". God is the One in charge here; not us. But when you pray, pray simply, with faith, and according to God's will.

Chapter 16: Do Not Worry

“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

(Matthew 6:24-34)

“Thinking about” is a little different than “worrying about”. We can plan, we can hope for, we can dream—it’s keeping

Rules For Life According To Jesus

out fear of not having things that Jesus is discussing here. He's also speaking to our having overwhelming desires for earthly things—more so than desiring God and His things. If we care more about the kind of car we drive than getting to our friends' house, then we aren't thinking about the right things.

What you focus on is what you care about. If you focus on God and His will, then you are focusing on the right thing. If you focus on the nicest things that you can wear, the nicest car you can have, the biggest house you can impress people with, then you are not thinking of the things of God.

We need to stay somewhere in the middle, between too much and too little. Paul put it like this: "I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:11-13) As in all things, Jesus cares more about the condition of our heart than the condition of our closet, pantry, or car.

The big takeaway here is to not let yourself be consumed with earthly things—one way or the other. When we have too many things in our life, we tend to focus on them; when we have too few things in our life, we tend to focus on what we don't have. Be like Paul and care about the things of God, regardless of your wealth—with faith in God.

Focusing on what matters to God will keep you from focusing on what He detests: greed, covetousness, jealousy, haughtiness, stinginess.... Be pure and be content.

Chapter 17: Store Up Treasures In Heaven

“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

Notice that Jesus said this just before He said what we just talked about in the previous chapter.

We can see here that Jesus doesn’t merely want us to focus on God above earthly possessions; He wants us to rid ourselves of the accumulation of things, and do right to all.

I know people who we could rightly call “pack rats”; people who store up so much stuff that they can barely get around inside of their house. This kind of mentality is just that: a state of mind (and heart). It brings a person to the point where they don’t feel complete if they don’t have more than they need for today. This leads to a state of perpetual discontentment. It’s a heart issue; one that Jesus commands us to avoid.

How many garages in America are stuffed full of stuff? How much of this stuff is necessary for day-to-day living? I’ve been guilty of this myself for years. Only recently have I purged myself of having too much stuff. I have also purged myself of an attitude that seeks after it. I have finally become like Paul and can be content with or without. I can tell you that this is the narrow path to true freedom from

Rules For Life According To Jesus

worldliness. So what should we do when God blesses us with more income than we need? That's easy—we share.

We also store up good works. Helping others who are in need and sharing the Good News with the world.

Imagine a country where the wealthy have only what they need and share the rest with the unfortunate souls in their community. Imagine those who are rich, pouring their lives into those who are destitute. How much wealth would be distributed in such a scenario? And take it one step further and have those who know how to live clean, prosperous, upright lives teaching others how to do the same. It almost sounds exactly like the Church in the First Century!

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

That is what the world should look like today. And guess what? It starts with you, right now (I've already begun). If you have nothing else to give, give love, respect, and honor. Teach what you know that is worth teaching.

Chapter 18: Do Not Be Judgmental

“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.
“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5)

Man, oh man! How difficult is this pill to swallow?

It’s so very easy to see the faults and shortcomings of others, but seeing our own is terribly difficult. We need to work doubly hard on this command, more than most of the others.

That old adage, “when you point a finger, you have three more pointing back at you” is true in a couple of ways:

1. If you have four fingers on your hand, when you point the index finger straight out, the other three are folded back and are pointing toward yourself.
2. No matter who you are, when you find fault in someone else, they will be able to find fault in you (and when they start to dig, they’ll find even more!).

Jesus’ command is to just keep it to yourself and not cast judgment on those in your life. In fact, it goes beyond just holding your tongue (or pen, or text, or social media) and

Rules For Life According To Jesus

keep your heart from feeling it in the first place.
(Remember how these are all about the heart?)

When I am in my right mind (once in a while), and I have a problem with someone around me, I find that I am best served if I focus on my own faults rather than focus on whatever is bugging me about someone else. I believe that this is the key to living out this command. But then, that's exactly what Jesus said, isn't it? First take care of your own issue (whatever it may be), then help the other person with their issue.

Once we have cleared our own conscience, we are better equipped to help someone else clear their own conscience.

And never, ever, try to "fix" someone who needs to accept the Lord's salvation. Probably the biggest complaint that I hear (and rightly so) is that Christians try to get those who are not saved to act a certain way or live up to the level we see in this study. This is not the way to reach out to anyone with the Gospel. It is exactly how to push them away from it! I know this from personal experience and from having frank, honest conversations with unsaved friends. (You can also read it in a myriad of secular books, too.)

When sharing the Gospel, let the hearer know that you are no more righteous than they are (of your own accord). Let them know that Jesus is the One Who made you right with God (and He alone).

True faith takes us out of the judgmental mind and into a loving, caring, patient, and gentle state of mind. That's what this command is for. It heals, rather than tears down.

Chapter 19: Guard what is Sacred

“Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.” (Matthew 7:6)

Ever wonder why this passage immediately follows the previous one (in the previous chapter)? It’s because they go hand-in-hand.

When someone is actively involved in being a bully, or robbing a store, or doing something else that is clearly wrong, that is not the time to tell them to love their neighbor as themselves (or some other wise command from this study). At least, not if they are clearly unsaved. I just spent a bit telling the reader here that trying to “fix” someone who is not saved prior to their being saved is the wrong order of things. We must (as believers) lovingly lead others to the Savior and if they accept Him and His cross, then let Him “fix” them, in whatever it is, in His way.

Again, this is probably the most destructive thing to the Gospel of Christ. If someone is not spiritual they will not respond favorably to truly spiritual things. They will instead mock, tease, ridicule or even become violent toward the one who is sharing such truths.

There’s a bit of a paradox, or irony, or inconsistency in unwisely sharing pearls of wisdom. And don’t think that those who are receiving such wisdom that is shared unwisely will not take notice of this irony. “Unsaved” does not equal “stupid”.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

Just like we don't take a speck out of an eye when our own eye is polluted, so we don't go around spitting out wisdom in an unthoughtful or unwise manner. This is how people (rightly) accuse the brethren of being hypocritical, unloving, or any of the other many accusations against our own unthoughtfulness toward others.

Trust me, being a righteous person before others will earn you enough persecution in this world without going the extra bit and spewing out pearls of wisdom to the wrong people at the wrong time.

Being a witness of God and His Son will already earn you a hefty amount of trouble in the world, you don't need to add to it with being insensitive to the condition of others.

Have you found yourself in the company of homosexuals? Deriding homosexuality isn't going to do anyone or you any good in that situation. Perhaps in time, as you get to know others in that group, you will have the opportunity to speak life into them, with gentleness and respect. But preaching to a fallen crowd will almost certainly ruin your day—without accomplishing what you intended.

Now, with that out there, it is possible to go into a prison and preach the Good News when done right (through the power of the Holy Spirit). And that is really what is paramount in all of this; follow the leading of Jesus' Holy Spirit. He will give you the wisdom to say what is needed when it is needed, and how it will be received.

But as a general rule—commandment, really—refrain from preaching holiness to the unholy, when they are not ready.

Chapter 20: Care For Those In Distress

“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’ (Matthew 25:31-40)

I included the part about the Great Judgment because I wanted to show how this has everlasting consequences. In chapter 17 we saw how we can store up treasures in heaven. Well, we just read what it looks like. A simple little thing like giving water, food, shelter, or spare clothing to someone in need can mean a lot to our Lord (not to mention the recipient here on Earth). Each little act of kindness is like a treasure added to our account.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

And so when Jesus says to “Store your treasures in heaven”, He means to do these kinds of things a lot in this life. And as I alluded to in chapter 17, if we live this way as a society we will have the most blessed society on Earth.

But of course, this is about more than what happens on Earth; it has eternal consequences.

When we tell others that we believe in Jesus, we should back up our assertion with action. Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? (James 2)

The number of ways to bless someone are infinite. Beyond material things, we can bless others with words of kindness or encouragement, we can bless with improving their situation with other people—like with a word of positivity about someone’s character to another. But along with words, we must show action.

In the years to come, this will become more important than ever. Before long, just being a Disciple of Christ will be enough to lose your job, your freedom, your house, your family, or your spouse! That is when this command becomes essential in the lives of all believers everywhere. It is best that we begin practicing now, so that we will be good at it when the time comes.

Caring for each other is the primary characteristic that we are to model for each other and the world. And this command tells us how to do it. This is what love looks like.

Chapter 21: Do Not Swear Oaths

“You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the Lord.’ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:33-37)

I think that when it comes down to it, this is a way to keep us honest, as much as anything else. A vow, or an oath is a kind of promise that appeals to something higher than the person making it; something that will keep the person accountable and hold him or her to what they swore to do.

Can you see how this is not a good thing?

If I swear by something greater than myself, or something (someone) very dear to me, what happens when my word fails? If I don’t do the thing that I swore by, the thing that I swore upon becomes as worthless as my pledge. This makes the damage done by not following through even worse than if I had not made the vow.

And why would we make such a vow anyway? Is our word not trustworthy enough on its own? It should be.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

In all things, we should work to ensure that we are honest and true. If we accomplish this, then there is no need for swearing vows upon something or someone else; it becomes needless, just as Jesus says it is.

This is why this command is so necessary to our character and the reputation of Jesus our Lord, Whom we serve. Having good character should be more important than just about anything we would swear upon anyway. Only our God in heaven should be more important than we are to each other, and we should never swear on God or each other. So then, what is left to swear upon that is greater than our character? Nothing. So really we should just be tending to our character from the start and not try to appeal to anything else to give it legitimacy; the legitimacy should be evident to all already.

If you are in the habit of swearing by something, you need to stop doing so. It isn't helping your character whatsoever anyway. If you are in the habit of swearing something like, "on my mother", or, "on my father", or, "God as my witness". Such swearing is not only ineffective; it is something that the Lord of all creation tells us to not do.

Just make sure that when you say something, it is trustworthy and true. After enough of that, people will trust your word—without all of the theatrics and drama of swearing upon something or someone else.

If you're from a big city in the New England area, you can do it. Start right away. It'll be easier than you think. ツ

Chapter 22: Watch out for false prophets

“Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves.” (Matthew 7:15)

This is one of those teachings that we don't really think about that often, but it can be a really important thing to look out for.

The nearer we get to the Last Days, the more important this will become. Jesus warned us that when things begin to get really bad, false prophets will show up in the world in large numbers. It sounds like it will be a kind of a trend at that time. Check this out:

“Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:9-14)

And here is Peter on the subject:

“But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. Many will follow their evil teaching and

Rules For Life According To Jesus

shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed." (2 Peter 2:1-3)

And John said this:

"Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world." (1 John 4:1)

And how do we test people to see if their prophecies are true? Besides seeing if the thing they prophesied will come true or not (false prophecy = false prophet), we can look into their lives and see how they live, and we can test if what they say is biblical.

If anyone declares anything to be true that doesn't square with scripture, that person is speaking falsely. Likewise, if someone says that their words are true but they deny Jesus with their lifestyle, they are not true either.

Jesus told us that, "You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?" (Matthew 7:16)

If someone is a false prophet, their behavior and message will give them away. All we need do is observe and see how they act. Biblical lifestyle? Biblical message? Maybe they're okay. Unbiblical message, unbiblical lifestyle: false prophet (every time). Follow this command and watch out for them, they're coming (they're already here).

Chapter 23: Exercise Spiritual Power

“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!” (John 14:12-14)

This one is a bit of a touchy subject.

One group of believers says that because Jesus told the Twelve and the Seventy-Two to do miraculous things that we can all do them. Another group says that His instructions were only for those two groups of disciples.

Wherever you come down on this debate, we are to exercise spiritual power, through prayer if nothing else.

As for me, I am leaning more toward all believers being able to do these miraculous things. Why do I lean this way? Because of what is given right here in John 14. He says “*anyone* who believes in me”. (We already looked at this in chapter 5.)

All of my life I’ve been a believer. But I was raised to not be presumptuous regarding God’s will. I have even been a bit scornful of those who claim to have the gift of healing, as one example.

If you aren’t familiar with the things that believers are supposed to be able to do (either by gifting or not), here is a

Rules For Life According To Jesus

list of nine gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church. There may be more.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

Whether you think you should simply pray, or you think you should act, whether you think that you should pursue all of the gifts or simply use what God gives you, the command remains the same: “anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works”... “Yes, ask me”.

The thing to figure out is How and When do we do these things. When you figure that out, please let me know. Until then, everyone should be praying for all things, all the time. Because there is spiritual power in prayer!

Chapter 24: Have Childlike Faith

“Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. Then he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

“And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me. But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.

“Beware that you don’t look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.” (Matthew 18:2-6, 10)

Really, it’s childlike humility. But childlike faith works just as well. He is also probably speaking about innocence.

When Matthew says “little” child, he may have meant really little—like a toddler. I only say this because it doesn’t take very long before children turn into little terrors (you parents know what I’m talking about).

However quickly the analogy breaks down, even children show their true colors of sinful desires within man. Still, we can all understand what He is talking about here.

As adults, we need to work at maintaining some form of innocence as we encounter life. We also need to strive to be as humble as a little child. After all, humility and innocence

Rules For Life According To Jesus

go together. The more innocent one is, the easier it is to be humble toward others.

I am tempted to say, "God help the person who harms a child". But then, God would be the last One to help someone guilty of that crime. He seems to be really passionate about protecting the innocent (if not in this life, then in the next).

And I'm not speaking so much about physical harm, but more about spiritual harm. After all, bruises can heal but once the innocence is lost, it's gone forever.

Also, a child can be raised to love God or to not love God. I shudder to think of all the parents in the world who have led their children away from God. What a price they will have to pay for that! This is not to be dogmatic about it and say that a parent is totally responsible for their child to accept Jesus. Sometimes we do all we can and the child still rejects the cross for salvation. I hope that I am free of guilt in this regard. Thank God that both of my children profess Christ in their lives.

I have also been very careful to not be guilty of leading other people's children (whatever age) away from the Savior. Rather, I always strive to lead people toward the cross, regardless of age, race, gender, or any other human trait. It's what I do. (I don't call myself "Gary the Gospel Guy" for nothing.)

If an evil person takes advantage of the innocence of a child for personal gain or any other ill, it won't go well for them. As for us, we should be protecting the children at all cost. Strive for innocence; it's commanded by the Lord.

Chapter 25: Do Not Exalt Yourself

“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don’t follow their example. For they don’t practice what they teach. They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.

“Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels. And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi.’ “Don’t let anyone call you ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. And don’t address anyone here on earth as ‘Father,’ for only God in heaven is your Father. And don’t let anyone call you ‘Teacher,’ for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Matthew 23:1-12)

This is one of those smooth sins that sneaks in when you least expect it. You feel like you’re on the right path, doing everything right, then BAM! you’ve been guilty of exalting yourself. It’s easy to do.

In case you’re not sure what it is to “exalt”, it’s to make yourself higher in rank, or to be very proud of yourself, to somehow think that you are better than someone else.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

As soon as you start to realize that you've been making yourself out to be more than you really are, stop! Repent. Apologize to the ones you've offended. Humble yourself before God and man. Okay? It isn't fun, but that's what has to happen.

I know that it isn't always easy to even recognize this in today's culture that says to think the most of yourself. How many times does the TV tell you that "you deserve it" (whatever good thing it might be)? The world is always pushing you away from the thinking that God wants you to embrace (in this case, humility).

And this is only going to get worse, too, as the days roll on by. Paul warned Timothy of this some 2,000 years ago.

"You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!" (2 Timothy 3)

So follow Paul's advice and stay away from people like that. And follow Jesus' command and don't become a person like that. All of this bluff and bluster is just a smokescreen anyway for those who are insecure. Be truly humble, you'll be glad you are.

Chapter 26: Settle Disputes Quickly

“When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.” (Matthew 5:25-26)

This command goes pretty well with what we saw in chapter 12. Only here He is saying to take care of it quickly.

Look, if you made a mistake and someone demands retribution, it’s their right. And not only should you pay back more than what they’re demanding (see chapter 12), you should do it as quickly as possible. After all, the longer a situation has to simmer, the hotter it will get.

This command is not only for disputes between the brethren (actually Jesus wouldn’t want any such disputes — we’ll look into this in the next chapter), but it is between believers and non-believers. Therefore, it is more imperative that we act quickly to make something right. Otherwise, it will reflect poorly upon our Lord, and that is not something that I would want on my head.

This is a way of making peace with others. And Jesus has called us to be peacemakers.

“God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

Rules For Life According To Jesus

I can't speak for you, but I want to be called a child of God.

Honestly, I've never been taken to court, personally, so I don't know too much about it. I do think that I've done things that would make me susceptible to it, but I've always managed to settle things before they got to that point.

And isn't that the point here? Settle out of court, "When you are on the way to court". If you are being belligerent and wishing for a fight in court, you must take care, because such an attitude is not Christ-like. You could be setting yourself up for a fall.

Notice, though, that it's about you being taken to court; not the other way around. You can still use the court system, if you feel you must, to get retribution from someone else. Of course, in that situation it's important to be merciful, as God is merciful, and treat others the way that you want to be treated. Forgiveness is a command as well (chapter 6).

So Jesus is giving us this command so that we don't have bigger problems and so that our actions don't reflect badly on Him.

After all, you can probably do a lot more for the Kingdom outside of the Big House (prison) than inside of it. But if you feel led to work in a prison ministry, they're out there. Just don't go into prison without being able to come back out when you are ready.

Settle disputes quickly—Jesus commands it.

Chapter 27: Settle Disputes Between Believers

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15-17)

Last chapter was about disputes between a believer and an unbeliever. Although this chapter is about disputes between believers, the first element of this method is good for dealing with unbelievers as well.

Going to a person privately (I would add calmly, lovingly, and with an open mind—ready to forgive) is a very important step in conflict management. Perhaps the whole thing was due to a misunderstanding; perhaps the other person was totally innocent; it could have been a mistake; there’s any number of reasons why you need to find out what the other person’s side of the story is right away.

This important first step can work to alleviate most problems before any further issues arise. NOT doing this first step can cause the issue to become much bigger than it should. It also has the potential to remove all drama from breaking out over what occurred. And doing this privately, just keeping it between the two of you, will quash it from

Rules For Life According To Jesus

expanding into a larger situation with others being involved and gossip breaking out all over the place. Entire churches have broken up because two people didn't handle their dispute in a biblical manner (this way).

Like all issues, this one is a matter of the heart. If the offender is being shameless, it's a problem and he/she needs to go. If the offense was unintentional, and/or the offender repents, it can be put to bed very quickly.

Unfortunately, church is no different than any other group of people. This is not how it should be, but I'm just keeping in line with what I've observed in American churches. Perhaps the worst part of this is when those involved don't act like Christ; they don't follow this command or most of the others. If everyone in the church were to do what Jesus commanded us, we wouldn't even have disputes within.

Therefore, these commands become paramount in having a healthy, loving Church. One that *IS* set apart from the rest of society. Read what Paul wrote about this:

"When one of you has a dispute with another believer, how dare you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other believers! ... Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated? Instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your fellow believers." (See all of 1 Corinthians 6:1-11)

I could really write an entire book about this one subject. But as you can see, I've reached the end of the page.

Chapter 28: Do not Oppose Brethren

“John said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he wasn’t in our group.’

‘Don’t stop him!’ Jesus said. ‘No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us. If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded.’”

(Mark 9:38-40).

There’s a proverb that skirts this issue as well:

“Do not slander a slave to his master, or he will curse you and you will be found guilty.” (Proverbs 30:10, NASB)

When I read all of this, I am reminded of the skirmishes and wars between different factions of Christianity over the centuries. At times, Christians have behaved as badly as Muslims, who kill each other over a dispute of their views.

Of course, when John (the apostle) made this comment the Faith was in its infancy and all of the various sects had not broken out yet. Maybe Jesus hadn’t yet informed him about discipleship and how believers can jump right in and become active in sharing the faith right away. After all, we don’t need years of training to go out and share with others the Good News. *You can start right away.*

Today, we still have differences in opinion and doctrine within the faith. Perhaps what we need to realize above all

Rules For Life According To Jesus

is what the Lord just told John and never get in the way of someone else's ministry.

It has become a problem in some circles within the Church that if a group is not doing things exactly the way we think that they should be done that we begin to try to discredit them altogether. This should never be.

The only time that anyone in the faith should criticize others is for the really egregious sins of false teaching that the apostles dealt with. And it's always been there.

Before we jump on our high horses and start throwing accusations around, we should use a very simple test to see whether it's worth the argument (which makes Christ look divided to unbelievers—and unappealing).

1. Does the teaching violate the basic tenets of the faith? (Salvation, the character of God, the validity of the Word, and other such foundational matters.) (See Gal. 1:6-9)
2. Does it teach a violation of morality? (2 Peter 2:1-3)
3. Is it biblical? Anything that is not biblical must be tossed.
4. What's the fruit of the teaching or activity? Any ministry that pulls people away from God or sound biblical teaching is harmful and destructive to people's faith.
5. Is it true or false? When a person claims to be a prophet, they are not allowed to make mistakes. One false prediction means that none of their words can be trusted.

I'm not a fan of divisions in the Church. I feel that the Bride has too quickly allowed herself to fall apart over the most trivial things. I'd like to see us all take this teaching of Jesus to heart and see that "not against us is for us" (Period)

Chapter 29: Remember Me

“[Jesus] took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

After supper he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.” (Luke 22:19-20)

Personally, when I take communion I take a few moments before partaking and meditate on the crucifixion of Jesus. It’s the same thing as having a moment of silence for those who have died on our behalf (think, Memorial Day).

I consider His slashed, bloodied, tortured body hanging on cruel splintery planks with nails holding him up. Every breath in that condition was a monumental task of pain and suffering, as He had to push Himself up by His pierced feet to catch a breath and slump back down into an unbreathable position. No doubt, the gashes on His swollen back, with its flaps of newly ripped skin, received splinters as He rose and fell against the wood.

And why did He suffer so? He did it for me, personally. Yes, I am as guilty of putting Him there as the Romans who pounded the spikes through His wrists and feet (through the top of the left foot and out the heel of the right—His left foot over the right). I am as guilty as the Sanhedrin who forced Pilate to commit Him to death, after they beat Him repeatedly and ripped out His beard.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

That was my crown of shameful thorns that was placed on His innocent head and cruelly pounded into place by soldiers taking turns with a staff.

I remember all of this, holding a cracker and an ounce of juice in my hands, wishing that it were me who suffered instead of Him. I deserve such treatment. I deserve to die a horribly torturous death; but not Him. He did no wrong. It was my wrongdoing that put Him there—not because I deserve His mercy and sacrifice, but because He is just that good to me. He loves me just that much. I praise Him with all my might at that moment—many times with tears falling on the carpeted floor, or on my finer pants.

At times, I fall on my knees in that moment and cry out to Him in my mind, if not aloud, and I bless Him with tears of gratitude and promises of servitude.

Do I remember my Lord and His suffering on my behalf? I do. Does it stir me to action, so that His agony does not go wasted? Every time.

Yes. I remember Him, and I forget all else in the process. I forget my ineptitude, my bent toward sinful thoughts and feelings (I must add, words and deeds). I forget the world with its empty promises and worthless rewards. I forget the wrongs committed against me by other fallen men. I forget my hatred, discontentment, and grudges.

I remember that He will be waiting for me when I finally shed this skin suit, with all of its corruption and pain. And I hope that I will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” I remember Him all day, every day, and I hope you do too.

Chapter 30: Be Merciful

“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. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.” (Luke 6:35-36)

When’s the last time someone lent money to an enemy—without expecting to be repaid?

Oh, what a wretch I am, that I do not have this kind of compassion and mercy within me?! Any such grace must come through me from the Holy Spirit. And I pray that it does, when necessary.

I don’t know about anyone else, but I tend to forget just how merciful, gracious, and loving my God really is.

Remember, mankind was the enemy of God when He became a man (His enemy). We could all strive constantly to reach such generosity and never come close. His goodness, like His other traits, is infinite. No man can out-give, out-love, or out-do God in any way—and all of His ways are good ways, all of the time.

A merciful execution is one that is quick and virtually painless; showing grace is to not execute the criminal at all. God shows us both. Compassion can be used in place of either mercy or grace and so it broadens the scope of this command (although some versions use mercy here).

Rules For Life According To Jesus

However you define it, compassion is an act of pure love. And I see that love is the first part of this commandment.

Jesus always has a way of cutting through the bull and getting to the heart of the issue (our heart in the issue)—or the condition of our heart in an issue. If one is willing to show compassion to an enemy, then who else would be denied such compassion? See how He tests our hearts in such a way that there is no room for wiggling away from what He is after? The brilliance of Jesus can never be overstated.

It is this kind of command that truly sets Jesus apart from anyone else in humanity. This is because He, and He alone, never had a corrupt nature to steer Him wrong. Only Jesus would come up with such a concept as this—and live it out before everyone.

Now the test is upon you. Are you ready, willing, and able to show such compassion to all mankind before you? I believe that I am ready and willing, but I pause at my ability. I feel that I need the helping hand of the Holy Spirit within me to show compassion where my heart screams for something else.

Once the terrorist is stopped from killing innocents (perhaps children), do we torture him or do we feed him and care for his own wounds? When the trash truck backs into our brand new car, do we lose it, or do we forgive and bless? When the thieves break in and steal our stuff, how should we respond? To ask an old question, “What would Jesus do?” ... Live that way—and God will bless you for it.

Chapter 31: Make Disciples

“Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

I have to confess a certain bent in this matter. You see, His command is to “make disciples”; not “evangelize”. And yet, how many of us (who actually do anything at all), go out and evangelize, without making disciples? And what’s the difference anyway?

To evangelize is to share the Good News with others. It is done for one or many at the same time. Jesus did take part in evangelism when He spoke to the crowds. But then when He was alone with His disciples, He disciplined them. To disciple (or make a disciple) is to go beyond the Good News and teach them everything about the kingdom (as much as possible).

My bent is toward discipleship; not evangelism—although I still do both. If we are discipling, we are also evangelizing; but the reverse is not true of evangelism.

We do not evangelize believers; we disciple them. But we can disciple those who are not yet believers.

Rules For Life According To Jesus

Here's how this works, practically: If you know someone whom you see on a regular basis, it would be better to disciple that person. If you only see someone once or twice in your lifetime, it might be appropriate to simply evangelize (although always discipling is always appropriate, in my view).

This very book is an example of discipling. It can be given to believers and those who are not yet believers, alike. Jesus says to, "Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you". And that's exactly what this book does.

So, one way to disciple others is to give them reading material on the commands of Christ (like this one). How easy is that? But, you need to be familiar with the material in this book, so that you can disciple others when you don't have it on you. And always follow up with those you can.

However you do this, you must follow Peter's lead: "Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!"

(1 Peter 3:13-17)

Make disciples, it's a command from Jesus.

Chapter 32: Be Ready

“So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.” (Matthew 24:42-44)

Here, Jesus is talking about His return to Earth. Yes, He’s coming back (maybe fairly soon).

When Jesus tells us to “be ready” for His return, I think He’s speaking to having an attitude of eager expectation. If I’m not mistaken, many of His apostles had the impression that He would return at any moment. And they were eager for it—right up until their deaths.

Now, we see that it’s been some 2,000 years since He told us to “be ready”. That’s a lot of eager expectation. But why not? It keeps our hope alive of seeing Him soon. And that’s a good thing.

Still, if we are paying attention to our Bible study, we see that in this same chapter He listed a whole bunch of things that will occur prior to His return. I’m not going to list them here, because I only have 2 pages per command.

One thing that He said about His return is that no one knows “the day or hour” that it will happen. (Mt.24:36) Unfortunately, some have taken this to mean that it may happen at any moment (called imminent return doctrine).

Rules For Life According To Jesus

But when we read what Paul said about His return we see that something very specific must take place before the Lord is seen in the skies over Earth.

“Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him. Don’t be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don’t believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us. Don’t be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction. He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

Paul is referring to the antichrist, whom Jesus kills upon His arrival back to Earth. So the antichrist (an actual person) will be revealed in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (an actual building in an actual city) before the Lord returns. Until then, He will not return.

Jesus also gave us this teaching in the same chapter where our command is given. In Matthew 24:29-31, Jesus tells us that His return will be after the Tribulation (which I don’t have space to discuss).

Finally, Paul assures us that the return of Jesus will not take us by surprise because we are in His light, not the darkness like others. So stay in the light of Christ and you will know.

Chapter 33: Obey Jesus' Commands

“If you love me, obey my commandments.” ~ Jesus
(John 14:15)

I am reminded of when Jesus and Peter were resting on the shore of Galilee after having some bread and fish that Jesus cooked up for them for breakfast. He asked Peter three times if Peter loved Him. Each time He gave Peter a command to take care of the believers. (See John 21:12-17)

We are at the end of our study and we see that doing all of the things in this book (His commandments) is also a commandment.

What has been your takeaway from reading the commandments of Jesus? Whatever you have gleaned from this study, I hope that you have seen the importance of living the way that Jesus has told us to live.

And notice, too, that obeying His commands is how He wants us to show that we love Him. I hope that shakes you like it shakes me. Of course I love Jesus. Of course I want to obey Him in all things. Well, this is what we need to do.

Do you remember what His promise is to those who obey His commandments? Let me remind you:

“If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't

Rules For Life According To Jesus

looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them." (John 14:15-21)

If we obey His commandments, He will do the following:

1. He will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be with us, so He will lead us into all truth.
2. He will not abandon us.
3. Jesus will also come to us.
4. We will see Jesus.
5. We will know of our unity with Him and each other.
6. He will reveal Himself to each of us.

I don't know about you, but I REALLY want those things in my life. I could not imagine trying to get through this fallen world without the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and the Father living in me and guiding me through all of these snares, traps, and dangers that are set out for us by the evil one—the enemy of man.

Live a life of love, devotion, and joy (despite our hardships).

Follow the Rules of Life According to Jesus. You'll be so very glad you did.

Closing Comments

Jesus also did [and said] many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:25)

I love how Jesus gives us a burden that is light and a yoke that is easy.

While many of these commands are not so easy to live out on a day-to-day basis, they sure do keep us on the right path if we follow them.

And feel free to contrast these commands with the rules of the many religions around the world. I think that you'll find that Jesus' way is the best way; that His rules are not so difficult or cumbersome that we cannot follow them.

And if you want, you can pretty much boil these all down to just two things: Love God with all your being; love others as much as you love yourself.

But I recommend that you really learn these things and teach others to do the same. That's discipleship. It's one way of really getting to know your Savior in the most intimate way—and sharing Him with others.

Not so much as a plug for this book, but just as a way to help you spread these commands to others, consider giving this book to all of your friends and family, whether they know Jesus as Savior or not. I'm not going to be getting rich or famous from this—that's not my intention. I just want to

Rules For Life According To Jesus

share Jesus with as many people as possible and I hope that you do too. My reason for writing this has been only that—producing a way to easily share the commands of the Lord.

I firmly believe that we are heading into some very troublesome times in the very near future. Knowing these teachings from the Lord and applying them will help you immensely in maintaining your faith and love, hope and joy in the Lord. You will be better prepared to lift each other up and support each other through those times.

I would like to suggest that you join a small Bible study group if you aren't already in one. Use this little book as a guide for group study of Jesus' rules for living a wonderfully enlightening and fulfilling life.

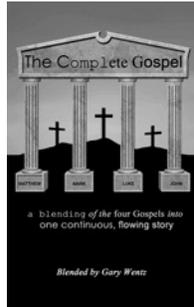
If I have stepped on anyone's toes in any particular doctrinal issue, that was not my intention; I simply have tried to present the Word as it is given so that we may all see the Lord work in our lives. If this is you, I hope that you will be able to get past that and serve the Lord without any hardness of heart.

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another. (Galatians 5:24-26)

In Him

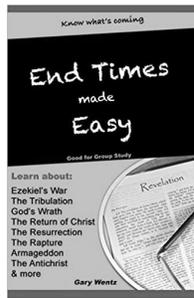
Gary Wentz (Gary The Gospel Guy [dot] com)

Other books by Gary, available on Amazon:



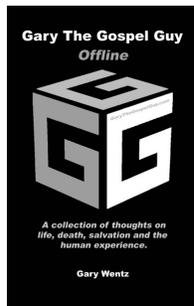
The Complete Gospel: a blending of the four Gospels into one continuous, flowing story

Using different fonts, all 4 Gospel accounts have been blended in such a way that the reader can tell which Gospel each word is from.



End Times Made Easy

Learn what the Bible actually says about the Last Days of the age. This study takes a complicated topic and makes it easy for anyone to understand using a chronological timeline. You might just be blown away by what to look for in the coming years.



Gary The Gospel Guy *Offline* *A collection of thoughts on life, death, salvation and the human experience.*

GaryTheGospelGuy.com in print form, this book helps those who are not yet believers to understand certain Christian doctrines in a very readable style. Believers like it too.

Also, please visit online, at
www.GaryTheGospelGuy.com
You can email Gary directly, at
GaryTheGospelGuy@gmail.com