

Rules for Holy Living

We have freedom in Christ. But we are also called to be a light and example to all those who see us. As the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:23 'Everything is permissible' but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible' but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 he goes on to say Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

What does this example look like? What example did Christ show us that each of us is to follow and show to others? The truth is there are literally books of the Bible full of examples. Far more than I can cover in just one short teaching. However, I did find a chapter that felt really summed everything up nicely that I'd like to share with you.

Colossians 3: Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

It's a little long but I like it because it feels like a nice summary of Christ's teachings and God's expectations of how we are to represent Him and how best for us to act in order to get along. I think what I like most about this passage is imagining what our world would be like if everyone followed this. But at the same time, I think I understand why Christians stick out like a sore thumb in the world. For those of us who truly have chosen Christ as our Lord and Saviour whom we obey, we follow His teachings and these guidelines and it looks so very

different from the rest of the world. Even in the little things like not telling crude jokes. It always gets me that when I was young I would tell crude jokes thinking I was probably the first one to think of it. Here's a letter from a guy about 2000 years ago saying, enough with the crude jokes already.

I know some people in this generation struggle with obedience in the family structure. It can seem a bit unfair that God made men the head of the household. Mind you, considering the man is also held accountable to God for how he raises and teaches his family I'd say there's a pretty heavy burden of responsibility that comes with being the leader. What I really like about it though, is that just about every passage I've ever found putting the man in charge, also includes the directive to men to be loving to wives and not to exasperate their children. As a family we have to be working together within the structure that God has created for us.

What I also find interesting is that many of the things listed really can come down to the greatest commandment, Mark 12:30-31 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.

That really sums up in just a few sentences what it really means to live a Holy life. To Love God first and foremost, and to love others as much as you love yourself. Because we really do love ourselves. We want things for ourselves and often are willing to deny someone else something they want if we want it too. But to sacrifice our own wants and desires for others as a show of our Love of God and as acknowledgment of His sacrifice for us. That is living the example that Christ set for us to follow. And when we make our mistakes we can praise our Lord all the more for the Grace He has given us and know that he has forgiven our mistake as soon as we've made it.