

Three Rules For Living

Luke 10:25-28, Luke 6:31, John 13:34

The three Scripture references which I'll be using in my message today exemplifies three extremely important areas of God's Word that will help us prepare for whatever lies ahead; for preparation for living is what worshipping God is all about. These three areas encompass the total meaning of life from God's viewpoint.

They are about how we as Christians should live our daily lives.

They are about how we should live in relationship to God.

They are about how we should live in relationship to our fellow man.

And how we must live in relationship to other Christians.

Implied in all of this is our view of God's Word and how seriously we as followers of Jesus Christ take the message that He has left us.

Further encompassed in this is the whole area of living; How we view God and the people around us, and just how seriously we take the responsibility of being a Christian.

God left us with a number of references to clarify each of these important areas of living. The first is found in Luke 10:25-28. Here is the key to opening the door of communications with God and mankind.

Luke 10:25-28

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readeest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

I. How To Live In Relationship With God

The first point in the Scripture is how we are to live in relationship with God.

Love God with all we have is what we are being told here. Our total being is illustrated by the **heart, soul and mind**. Our Scripture also includes **strength** to emphasis where our physical direction must be also.

Love God with all your heart for it signifies the real feelings of mankind. It is the mirror of the soul. What ever you think in your heart – that’s what you are, or what you become the bible says.

Love God with your soul for this is the very part of mankind that communicates with God. It is the part of man that is very God Himself, for we are told that God breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul.

Love God with all your strength for this signifies the efforts of mankind we are to work for God in everything that we do. We are to devote our physical energies to God and His kingdom.

And, we are to love God with our minds for this is where all ideas begin and thoughts start to be put into action. We are to devote our thinking to the things of God if we are to keep our minds pure — for the things of the mind influence the things of the soul, mind and body; Right thinking for God or wrong thinking for Satan.

It is clear that we’re to love God with all the energy we have if we are to serve Him. Sometimes this is hard to do. We are only human beings and we may get angry with God when we don’t understand what he’s doing that affects our lives. Have you ever been angry with God? I’ll venture to say you have – at least I have.

Let me relate a personal story of how and why I became angry with God. On April 29th, 1966, my wife died. We had one son, five years old, and I was left all alone to try and raise him myself, and I didn’t have the vaguest idea about how I was going to do it, and what I was going to do. I was angry with God for leaving me in this situation. After all I had prayed earnestly there by her bedside as I watched the breath of life ebb from her body. How could God do such a thing to me? I was angry for a long period of time after that.

A number of years later, after my resentment had subsided, I was telling my pastor, Jim Halliburton, about these feelings. His reply was, **“It’s OK to be angry with God, He’s big enough to take it.”**

This led me to begin to understand that God does not expect us to totally accept the things that we can’t possibly understand, simply because we can’t always comprehend the ways of God. He does though expect us to accept all things by faith even when we can’t understand them.

As I look back and reflect on the total life of my wife, I now realize God gave me several good years with her. Even though she was sick a lot, He allowed her to have a child, which the medical doctors told her was not possible. God had truly blessed us, I just couldn’t see it through my anger. And God has continued to bless me for He brought Claudia into my life. She has helped me get Mark into adulthood, and she has really been a great strength to me in all that I have undertaken.

What are the lessons to be learned from this experience of life? For me it means to:

Love God – That is the key to living a fruitful life.

Love God – That is the source and assurance of eternal life.

Love God – That's the only way to get freedom for the soul and peace in the sinful world in which we live.

Keep in mind that even when you get angry with God that it's OK to feel that way towards the one you love. He understands. He'll help you through the tough spots in life.

II. Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

But there is a second part to the message in our Scripture that is extremely important to the Christian and that is to love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus explained who our neighbor is in the story of the Good Samaritan, and we all understand it even though we sometimes don't practice it. Everybody who is living on earth is our neighbor.

They are all creations of God, and we're to love them, but there is a qualifier here, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. This implies that we can't love others if we don't love ourselves.

Immediately, a picture of a self-centered person comes to mind, for we often talk about these persons as loving themselves. We must not confuse the selfishness of these kinds of people with the kind of love God is talking about. He is saying that if we don't like who we are and what we are, we can't possibly like what we see in others.

How does one love himself? By accepting what he is exactly where he is. Don't look at other people and compare yourself to them. God made all people exactly like He wants them to be. Of all the billions of people God has created, there have never been any two exactly alike. Even identical twins have some differences that can be distinguished. You can be assured that a mother can always tell them apart. How one perceives himself determines how he will respond to God and the world.

When I attended Clemson University many years ago, I heard a story about a girl who was a typical wallflower. She never dated, never went out, and didn't seem to have any friends. Two male students were discussing how important it was for people to accept themselves, they thought of this girl and decided to run an experiment. The idea

was for the two of them to swap off and keep her busy with dates. They took her to nice restaurants and public activities such where she would meet other people.

In the beginning she was kind of withdrawn and uncomfortable, but as time went on, she became more at ease and relaxed. She began to intermingle with other people and soon other boys were asking her out. As the story was told to me, it wasn't long until the original two boys couldn't get into her date book because she was so popular.

What happened to this girl? She was exactly as she was before, but she had changed her self-image. When she began to think more highly of herself, others begin to also. It was then when she began to blossom.

If we don't have a high self image, we can't have a high opinion of others, for we tend to view people based on what we think of ourselves. In order to love our neighbor, we have to love ourselves first. If we are hung up on disliking our selves, we won't have the time nor understanding to love others.

Love God, love your neighbor, love yourself... That's what Jesus told the lawyer. That's what He is still telling us today.

Jesus made this concept a little clearer in His Sermon on the Mount. We read in Luke 6: 31, the Golden Rule.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

This Scripture is familiarly quoted as **“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”** Here He is telling us how to treat all of mankind. Both saved and unsaved alike. He's telling us to put ourselves in the other person's place. He's saying we need to ask the question, **“How would I like to be treated?”** before we pass judgment on others.

This does not mean to lie down and be a doormat. It means to let God stay in control.

When you have dealings with dishonest people, don't be dishonest yourself, this is not how you like to be treated.

When you're dealing with a liar, don't be a liar yourself. This is not how you like to be treated.

When you give some one a promise, keep it, for this is how you like to be treated.

Treat others as you would like to be treated. Practice the Golden Rule.

To get a clearer picture of the application of the Golden Rule, let's look at how Jesus responded in certain situations.

First, let us realize that He never put up with the nonsense of the **religious leaders** who were always criticizing Him. He called them snakes. This is reminiscence of the snake in the Garden of Eden and was about as an insulting name that a Jew could be call for it symbolized Satan.

If we are to follow the Golden Rule, we too must take a firm stand when it comes to the things of God. The question for the Christian is, “**If you were doing something repulsive to God, wouldn’t you want to do something about it?**” Likewise when we see other professing Christians who are doing things that we know is repulsive to God; we must try to reason with them.

It seems the religious leaders were the only ones that ever got Jesus angry. Do you wonder why? Because the one thing Jesus could not stand at that time, and still can’t stand today, if the person who claims to be a follower of God, but is in reality following Satan.

It is clear that we have to be ever on guard for the phony religious leaders have always been with us, and will be until the end of time.

We also see where Jesus tried to reach **the rich people** of His day, but was totally unsuccessful because He realized that money was ahead of their hearts, with the exception of perhaps **Zacchaeus**. When he met the master, he tried to get it all straightened out immediately. The Bible records where he gave half of his riches to the poor and made restitution to those he had cheated. When the rich gets saved it goes all the way to the bank account. The principle of the Golden Rule totally takes over.

We have numerous example of how Jesus met the common people. **The woman at the well** is a perfect example. She was a hated Samaritan, but Jesus didn’t even consider that, He saw her as a fellow human being – met her where she was in life and took off from there.

The woman caught in adultery is another example. He also met her where she was in life, didn’t question her past, for He was only concerned about her future. He said’ “**Go your way and sin no more.**” – The words that are so dear to the born again believer.

You see, this is how the Golden Rule works. Put yourself in the place of the other person. Try to get into his mind. Ask yourself the question, “**If I were in this person’s place, and been raised with his circumstances of life, what would I want someone to say or do for me?**” “**Do unto others as you would have them do unto you**” will take a totally new and significance meaning if we try to approach life form this viewpoint.

III. Dealing With The Saved

Then there is another category of people we must deal with. These are the saved. Sometimes the Christian is the hardest person in the world to deal with. He has been shaped by his environment, his background, and personal beliefs. Some have so many categories of sin that they can hardly live in this world. Others have such a loose sense of following Jesus that we begin to wonder if they are really saved. But as fellow Christians, we must accept them all. Sometimes dealing with them tries the soul, but there is a way, and Jesus left us with the method in John 13:34.

He called it the new commandment. He said, "Love one another as I have loved you— love one another."

First, we are to love one another. This seems simple on the surface, but some of these Christians I deal with are hard to love. They always want their way. They demand my time. Some are too grouchy. And on and on it goes, but Jesus knew about we weak Christians and knew that we needed an example to follow. He clearly qualified how we are to love one another. He said, **"As I have loved you."**

To fully understand the new commandment we have to know how just much Jesus loved us. You see He loved us enough to leave His heavenly home and come to this old corrupt world so that He could die on the cross so that we might have eternal life. We know from the biblical record that He found this distasteful, but we know that love has a way of motivating people to do distasteful things.

I can assure you that there is not a person in this room that that hasn't done something this very day that didn't really want to do because someone they loved asked them to. Just the other day Claudia asked me to wash the dishes. I hate that, but because I love her, I did it. You who are married fully understand what I mean.

When you were young and courting, you found yourself doing many things for each other you didn't want to do, but love motivated you beyond your dislike. This is the kind of love Jesus has for us.

Then He loved us enough to put up with rejection and abuse all his earthly years. Why would He want to do that? He could have easily called a stop to this thing we call civilization, but He didn't. He endured it all because He loved us too much to let us destroy ourselves.

But the ultimate expression of Jesus' love was His death on the cross. Jesus did not do it for Himself He did it for us. If He had not died, we couldn't live. He loved us enough to give his life up for us.

He clearly stated, **"As I have loved you, love one another."** This statement carries with it the total impact of how we are to treat each other as fellow Christians. We are to love one another in spite of our faults. We have to be ever reminded that

none of us is perfect, and accept that each of us is doing the best we can; that is all we can expect.

Christianity is a growing process and we have to help each other to grow. If we don't have the love of God in our hearts, the influence of Satan will control our lives and God will get left out. People will argue, get mad at each other, and even split churches. We must face the fact that Jesus never caused an argument or split a church, Satan always does that.

Only three rules for living; One to tell us how to treat God, One to tell us how to treat our fellow man, and one to tell us how to treat each other as Christians. We must obey all three rules for a full abundant life here on earth. If we leave God out, all things get left out. If we leave our fellow man out, part of God gets left out. And if we leave our fellow Christians out, the church of Jesus Christ will suffer severely. We can't afford to ignore any of these rules for God must reign supreme over all we are, and over all we do.

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