

Why Do You Follow the Rules?

1 Jn 5:1-5

It seems that one of the hottest debated theological concepts is obedience to God. Man wants God to save him, but once he is saved, he seems to forget to follow God. This last week I read an article about church attendance and that it was more than a suggestion from God, it was a command. The writer received a lot of negative comments from people who said they worshipped God just fine at home and that attendance was just a way of pretending to be righteous like the Pharisees. It only mattered if you were in relationship with Jesus in your heart. Christianity is from the heart not an obligation. Many churches are like the church in Malawi. They were started by very strict British missionaries. They are all about rule keeping and I mean they keep a written record of those who don't keep the rules of the church! Last time I was there, a Malawian was preaching in 1 John 5 and dealt at length with obedience, when he got to his notes on love, he literally said, "well, I'm going to skip over this love stuff so we can concentrate on being right with God."

So, what is the right approach to loving and following God? Let's look and see what John has to say about this topic.

PRAYER

- I. Love the Father, love the Son, and Love the brothers and sisters
 - A. Family Ties
 1. Chapter 5 continues with his love each other theme that is so strong in this letter.
 2. Sometimes it was hard for me to love my brother while we were growing up. He was very different from me. He was a nerd and I was the popular one, I was athletic and he wasn't. He was the good boy that all the church adults loved...and I wasn't. It was embarrassing to have him tag along sometimes.

We called him mini adult because he always wanted to be a grown up. We often had ... discussions... about our level of love for each other.

3. But after all was said and done; no matter how much he ticked me off, he was my brother and don't mess with him or you mess with me as well.
4. Why would I love him even though he royally ticked me off at times? Why would I put up with his comments, his nerdiness?
5. He's my brother, we're family.

B. Christian Ties

1. That works the same way with the church.
2. There are some people in the church that just tick me off at times. They aren't always the type of people I would choose to hang around with.
3. But we are family, we have the same father, and because of that I love them anyway.
4. That is what vs 1-2 are all about. We love God's children because he is our father and we love him!

II. Showing Love for the Father

A. Obey His commands

1. John makes a sweet little literary turn. He morphs from love into obedience.
2. vs 3 starts by saying "for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.:"
3. If I love him I will obey him.
4. While we need to be careful about becoming legalistic and making everything about the rules, love from the heart does involve obeying the rules.
 - a) In John 14:23–24 (NLT) — 23 Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. 24 Anyone who doesn't love me will not

obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me.

- b) In fact, at least 8 times Jesus is recorded as telling us to obey his commandments.
 - c) The writers of the letters tell us at least 15 times we are to obey God and his gospel.
5. Obedience is a part of faith whether we like it or not.
6. It's a part of our love for God.
7. Going back to our family illustration: Because I love my father, I usually obey him; even when I don't like it.
- a) When I was in college, I wanted to buy a car. I arranged for the financing, put down a down payment, signed the papers and had the car in my possession, when I called dad to tell him about it. He felt uneasy about my buying a used car with no one to check it over for me and told me I should take it back. He also reminded me that I didn't make enough in the summer to pay for the car and my schooling. Let me tell you, that is the last thing a 19-year-old wants to do is have his father tell him to take his first "real" car back to the dealer.
 - b) That was one of the hardest times I ever had obeying my father, but I loved him, so I did what he asked.
8. Loving our heavenly Father is the same way.
9. There are times when it is no problem to obey him, because it's what I wanted to do anyway.
10. but those times when you really want to do something else than what he commands us; man, it's hard to do!
11. But we do, or should do, because we love him.
- B. His commands are not burdensome
- 1. So how does the last half of vs 3 fit in? How can it be that his commands "are not burdensome"?
 - 2. It takes us realizing that he is doing it for our own good.
 - 3. A man who was 70 pounds overweight had never thought about the strain he was placing on his heart and knees until he developed coronary

problems and arthritis. His doctor put him on a strict diet and told him that if he wanted to improve his health he would have to shed those extra pounds. Several months later in a conversation with his minister, the man made this interesting observation: "For years I was carrying a heavy burden without realizing it. Now I've exchanged it for a new one--this diet! It's similar to what happened in my spiritual life. The one difference is that the burden Jesus placed on me is easier and lighter than the one I got from the doctor."

4. This guy has it right.
5. The extra burden of his weight was killing him.
6. Having to diet was a burden as well, but the burden of living on a diet was better than dying, so it was more acceptable.
7. We carry around a huge burden of sin in our lives before we are saved.
8. Christ takes that burden away, but also says we must follow his commandments.
9. I may not always like them, but compared to my sin and its consequences, I would rather deal with the much lighter burden of following God.
10. I know he loves me and is doing this for my own good.

III. Victory Makes the Burden Lighter

A. Victory makes the burden lighter

1. 1 John 5:4 (ESV) — 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.
2. I played soccer for our college as a fullback. Basically, it was my job to make sure the ball never got past me and into the net. If you never played soccer, it is a very physical game. I was often run over, smashed in to, stupidly put my body in front of a ball that had just been kicked by guys with legs as big as trees, and many other things a sane human would avoid. Rarely was there a game that I didn't come out of with part of my skin missing on my legs and I have little chips along my shin where I got to the ball first leaving only leg for the other guy's foot to connect with. However,

no matter how battered I got, it didn't hurt near as much when we won than when we lost.

3. Victory made the sacrifice worthwhile.
4. Victory made the aches and pains less noticeable.

B. We CAN overcome the world, because of that victory

1. By trusting in God, and following his commandments, he shows us the way to endure the world and not let it overcome us, but we overcome it.
2. It gives us strength we wouldn't have otherwise.
3. In 320 AD of a group of 100 Romans soldiers who had been drawn together in a special bond of closeness through the experiences they shared in battle were split apart by a terrible tragedy. Among them were 40 Christians. One day the emperor Licinius called for a test of loyalty, demanding that every member of the army bow down before his statue. 4 years before he started a very hard persecution of Christians. As each of the 40 believers passed before the image, they refused to worship it. One by one they declared, "I'm a Christian!" And every one of them received the sentence of death. Because of his high regard for these men, the centurion was heartsick as he had them stripped and marched them onto the ice, where they would be left to die from exposure to the bitter cold. As they went out into the darkness, this chant rang in his ears: "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, claim for Thee the victory and from Thee the crown." The Centurion waited throughout the night on shore near a roaring fire, hoping some would change their minds and obey the imperial decree. Finally, he saw a solitary figure groping his way toward the fire. Approaching the emperor's statue, the half-frozen man fell down before it. But no one else appeared! The centurion was so moved by the steadfastness of the 39 remaining men that he dropped his armor and rushed to join that dying band. In a few moments, the cry again was heard

echoing across the frigid wastes: "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, claim for Thee the victory and from Thee the crown."

4. They burned the bodies the next day, and shortly after, nearby Christians came and collected the ashes. To this day, jars of those ashes are held in various churches around the world.

C. vs 5 - Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

1. In the Greek, the words for overcomes and believes are grammatically set up to show a continuation.
2. He who is continuously overcoming the world is the one who continuously believes that Jesus is the Son of God.
3. It's a discipline for them.
4. In martial arts, you train or discipline your body to react without even thinking about what you have to do to overcome your opponent.
5. We need to train our minds, so that we don't even have to think about what we need to do to overcome the world.
6. It's a habit; it's part of us. Based on the understanding that Jesus is the son of God.
 - a) The one we committed our lives to.
 - b) The one who overcame death, so we could overcome sin.
 - c) Our victory is in Jesus Christ

IV. Concl.

A. We love because God first loved us.

1. It was that love, that set in motion the salvation of our souls.
2. It is that love that creates a desire in us to follow him, even when we would rather do something else.
3. It is that love that overcame the world, death, even Satan.
4. It is that love that gave us the victory.