

The Good Life

Part 3: This Rules

Colossians 2:16-23

TEASER CLIP

INTRO VIDEO

WELCOME

WE: All want to experience The Good Life. We think Good Life means... more, better, working dishwasher

What we've seen is the Good Life we are actually all looking for is...

The Good Life- Experiencing the freedom of being completely loved and accepted by God.

For most, our minds go to **RELIGION**. "Want God to love and accept you?... gotta be religious."

What we've done for thousands of years...

Good life? Appease the god/gods/universal force... gain favor through sacrifices, practices, rituals, festivals, RULES.

Always some kind of rules that keep the powers that be happy with you.

Those that follow the particular god's rules are the ones who EARN the opportunity to have a good life...

Problem- Doesn't work: Instead of a Good Life- guilt, boredom, resentment, exhaustion...

Good people have bad things happen/bad people have good things happen.

Why you might have rejected church/xianity- woke up and realized these rules are doing the opposite of giving you the Good Life.

Jesus said following him would bring freedom and a full/satisfying life...

But isn't "following Jesus" just a fancy way of saying the "Xian religion?" Maybe not...

Apostle Paul explains the difference...

Enters history as one of the biggest & best rule followers/enforcers ever known.

- When people started turning away from Jewish religious laws took it on himself to help God out by hunting down this new group of people called Xians...
- Then met Jesus did 180... spent rest of life explaining the freedom Jesus brings.

Section last week... explained how Jesus can set us free from our sinful nature and the power sin has over us... now goes more into depth of how that freedom gives us the life we all truly want...

Tackles a common, damaging, abused misconception... **The Good Life is not a reward for good behavior**

GOD:

16 So [since you have accepted Jesus' offer to make you a new person/cut off sin nature] *don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths*

Jewish religious leader rules- eating "clean" foods, observing religious days, Sabbath observance.

Created extra rules to make sure they were "holy."

Collosea- People were saying, "Add this stuff to following Jesus... and God will be happy with you and give you the life you want."

We still do same thing...

Some xians- drinking, dancing, clothes, Sunday church (must not love God if you accept a job on sundays), music was big when I was growing up.

Often used to differentiate between who's really a good xian and who's "lukewarm."

But aren't rules good?

17 *For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.*

Of course having morals and making wise choices are extremely important for a happy/healthy life...

What Paul is saying is... These rules don't actually do anything to bring us closer to God... in no way earn us God's love and acceptance.

They are a **shadow** of the relationship Jesus offers us...

And does a shadow really clarify what something is like, or is the real thing so much more clear in its brilliant colors and beautiful details?

Religious rules only offer a shadow of the true life Jesus gives.

18-19 *Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.*

Pious self-denial- That's what it is right? "God, I want to do all this "fun" stuff but *Lwon't* so you'll think I'm super holy and you'll do what I want you to do for me. Look how much I'm denying myself and how well I am behaving... now you owe me"

And then for bonus points we add hyper-spirituality... for the Collosians it was worshipping angels b/c they are obviously holy...

For us maybe it's "worshipping" church, bible, USA, good works, candidates, movements, family, causes...

Not necessarily bad things, but when they become our route to justifying ourselves, our route to being holy, being on God's good side... instead of making us more loving, kind, forgiving... more like Jesus, they make us proud and lead to comparisons... "look how good we are! So much better than those who don't do this"

20 *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 [JF's "Rules of the World" you think worldly rules... "if it feels good do it," etc. (yes foolish but not what Paul is talking about)], such as, "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"?*

Rules of the world- human rules that we create in order to make us think we are more acceptable to God

When you decide to follow Jesus, your old self, that was bound up in all this guilt-performance-fear, is gone...

Paul is saying, "Why are you letting these empty rules still control you? Why are you acting as if you are still controlled and imprisoned by evil? You are free!"

22-23 *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*

Paul is saying, what we all know... All of our attempts to be "spiritual" or "holy" or "pious" is useless and empty and ultimately makes us miserable.

Rules can't give us the Good Life.

Rules cannot truly change a person.

Rules simply try to get bad people to do less bad things.

Rules might SEEM like a good idea BUT... They only make things worse...

Rules create... Guilt, Fear, Uncertainty, and ultimately Hypocrites

Guilt- not measuring up/living up to gods' requirements... can never do or be enough

Fear- I feel guilty so obviously I'm going to be punished or rejected. But I don't really know...

Uncertainty- Am I in or out? HAVe I done enough? What if I mess up? What if I've ruined it and don't even know it?

Hypocrites- To feel better... start comparing yourself... not as bad as THEM... "Well yeah I did that but I had good intentions you do it b/c you're evil"

"But NT full of rules..." is it? Examples of what love looks like.

- Why not sleep w/ someone not married? Using.
- Why not lie/steal/anger- Dishonors/breaks relationship

Both Religion and Jesus promise to give us The Good Life...

Religion offers to control you. Jesus offers to free you.

Religion never delivers. Jesus gives more than we can imagine.

Don't have to try to earn anything, pretend to be anything, purposely make yourself miserable...

If the xianity you experienced (and maybe rejected) didn't make you feel free, it wasn't Jesus.

YOU: Not JF?

Jesus doesn't want to make you "better" he wants to make you FREE.

Jesus not interested in you just doing less bad things... he wants to completely transform you. He wants to empower you to love others not b/c it will make him like you more, earn his favor but b/c you have experienced his love and can't help to share that love with others.

He's not asking you to work really hard to improve yourself, but to rely on him to change you from the inside out.

If you let him, he will transform your thinking and give you his heart...

It's not freedom to simply do whatever feels good (actualtyl slavery to our own desires) its the freedom from HAVING to live for and worry about ourselves, freedom from that sin nature... freedom to love in a way we could never do simply by trying really hard.

Matt. 11:28-30 What keeps you from that kind of God?

It's free (gift card example)

When jesus transforms you... the law of love is all you need and God, himself, gives you the power and heart to live it out... in fact he writes the **Law of Love** on your heart!

JF- What rules are you trying to follow in order to be closer to God?

God doesn't love you b/c you keep the rules.

Good life comes from accepting that God loves you b/c you are his. He loves you b/c he made you. And that he is willing to love others through you.

Our lives are a response... faith expressing itself through love.

WE:

Imagine never feeling like you have to prove yourself to God or anyone else.

...

Not having to worry about whether you're in or it, if you've done enough.

But knowing, being confident in the fact that you are loved and accepted by God.

You are free from religious rules and you are free to be you and to love others with the love of Jesus?

Freedom from religious rules is the freedom to truly live The Good Life

The good life comes from accepting God's love and allowing him to lead and transform you.

Accept it, Enjoy it, Share it.

Questions

1. How have you seen God working in your life this week?
2. What in this week's episode and/or passage surprised, annoyed, shocked, or encouraged you?
3. Read Matthew 11:28-30. Do you see a difference from what Jesus said to the religion(s) you've seen or experienced in the past? If so, why do you think there's a difference?
4. What are the barriers/challenges you have to accepting or living out the freedom Jesus offers? How can your group pray for you in that this week?