

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #34: DON'T BREAK THE RULES--OBEY THE RULES!

For a lot of people today, rules and laws are out; rebellion is in. Since the 1960s, a dominant theme in advertising has been “breaking the rules.” Consider:

- “No rules” (Outback Steakhouse)
- “Just do it” (Nike)
- “The rules have changed” (Dodge cars and trucks)
- “Sometimes you gotta break the rules” (Burger King)
- “Relax--no rules here” (Neiman Marcus)
- “The rules are different here” (1980s Florida tourism motto)
- “No limits” (Foster Grant Sunglasses)
- “Your world should know no boundaries” (Merrill Lynch)

There are some not-so-subtle subliminal messages here: (1) Rules are bad; breaking rules is good. And (2) There really are no rules; everything is negotiable.

One Internet writer put it this way: “From cars to hamburgers, shoes to investment firms, clothes to department stores, alcohol to sports drinks, the theme of ‘no accountability’ is being preached. Solomon had this in mind when he told the young man to live in whatever way he pleased, but that in the end, he was accountable to God. This, by design, is never mentioned in these commercials. The more men and women Satan succeeds in getting to live life ‘to the full,’ the more will miss eternal life. And this same pervasive theme of no rules, boundaries, responsibility or accountability is being heard dozens of times daily by ourselves and by our children.”

(<http://truthandtidings.com/1997/11/mind-control-how-satan-uses-advertising-slogans-part-2/>)

This trend in advertising, sadly, just reflects modern views of truth:

- Truth is relative; it is whatever you want it to be.

- What is truth for me might not be truth for you.
- There is no such thing as “absolute” truth.

I want to make two simple points in this article: (1) There are moral and spiritual rules in life; truth is definite and objective. (2) It is better to follow the rules of life than to break them. (In the case of your eternal destiny, it is absolutely vital.)

THE FIRST POINT: TRUTH IS DEFINITE AND OBJECTIVE

Let's define some terms: *Objective* means factual, free from or independent of personal feelings and biases, detached, real. Objective truth deals with external principles and phenomena (external to me, detached from my opinions and experiences).

The opposite of objective is *subjective*, which means “relating to feelings or emotions, proceeding from and based on an individual's inner thoughts or personal views.”

Here's the gist of these two concepts: If something is *objective*, its truthfulness is not dependent on how I feel about it. An example would be the law of gravity. That law just IS--it is a truth that stands on its own, outside of me. If a concept is *subjective*, it is internal to me and based on my feelings.

One of Satan's master strokes has been to convince people that truth (rules, laws) is not something absolute and external to us; it is subject to perceptions and opinions. To many moderns, there are no *truths*; there are only *views*.

This softening and blurring of authoritative rules and truths manifests itself in subtle ways. For instance, we used to talk about and teach “moral principles.” Now, we talk about “moral values.” What's the difference? A principle is a fundamental *truth*--a RULE. Principles are objective, absolute, external to me, and true whether I believe them or not. A value is simply a personal view, something I prize--it's a feeling internal to me. Your values could be different from mine.

Satan has been working on this “no rules, no accountability, no boundaries” thing for some time now--actually, about 6,000 years. Genesis 3:1 says, “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” In other words, has God made a RULE? An absolute, non-negotiable, objective statement governing your behavior? You mean God didn’t ask you and Adam how you FEEL about it?

Here is Eve’s response: “And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden [FIRST RULE], but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die [SECOND RULE]” (Genesis 3:2,3).

Notice that Eve had no intellectual problem understanding that:

- There are rules governing our behavior in the garden.
- Those rules came from God, not from us.
- Those rules can be precisely stated.
- Those rules deal with definite acts and a definite tree.
- They have definite consequences if broken.

Read on to verses 4 and 5: “And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die [Translation: *There are no rules--the rules can be changed--the rules are not written in stone*]. For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil [Translation: *Sometimes you gotta break the rules to get what you deserve*].”

By this time, Eve is on board. Verse 6 says, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes [Translation: *God’s rules really seem silly, restrictive, and unnecessary*], and a tree desirable to make one wise [Translation: *I’m smart enough to make my own rules*], she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate.”

Notice what happened here: Eve took a RULE, a law governing behavior that existed independent of her, and INTERNALIZED it--made it subjective, dependent on her own views and perceptions. And she paid a heavy price, as did Adam.

You know what? The law of gravity works regardless of how I feel about it. If I call the concept of gravity a power-grabbing device invented by white Victorian males, it still works. If I say I disapprove of the law of gravity, it still works. I can say I don't believe in gravity and jump off a building, but I also will pay a heavy price.

This is easy to understand in terms of natural laws and rules. But it is exactly the same with regard to moral laws and spiritual rules. Hell is a real place, whether I believe in it or not. If I call hell a concept invented by 18th century preachers to scare sinners, it still exists.

Here are some other moral and spiritual rules:

- "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20).
- "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).
- "Unless you repent, you will perish" (Luke 13:3).

These spiritual laws are just as real and true as natural laws.

THE SECOND POINT: GOD'S RULES WORK--THEY ARE FOR OUR GOOD

God gave strict laws on marriage. Many people view them as harsh and restrictive. But they are for our happiness and our good. And *they work*. The most stable, the happiest, and the most beneficial arrangement in any society is one man for one wife, for life.

God gave us rules regarding human relationships: "It is more blessed to give than to receive...Love your neighbor as yourself....Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." All proven to work! Yet we persist in rebellious experimenting--in promiscuity, homosexual "marriage," self-promotion and aggression, anti-social behavior, etc. Why is it, though, that we were supposed to

be liberated and have all this sexual and intellectual freedom, and yet we can't build enough jails and mental clinics to hold all the people who need them?

Suppose you go through life obeying the rules, being a good citizen, staying within the moral boundaries God has set. Then you get to the end of life and find out that Christianity was all a lie, you really are just a glorified ape, and there is no God, no heaven, and no hell. What does that mean? It means you leave this world at least on an even keel with the atheist, the criminal, and the ungodly. But you have lived an infinitely better life than those people. You have had joys they will never know. You have had hope and faith that sustained you through the difficult times. So you have not really lost anything.

But suppose the atheist and the evolutionist and the ungodly are wrong, and you are right--there is a God, a judgment, a heaven, and a hell. You have kept the rules, and you win. But they lose everything.

So do not be swayed by this not-so-subtle ad campaign about breaking rules. That may be a cute advertising slogan, but it is a sinister, Satanic way of planting doubt about God's absolutes. Moral rules are real and fixed. Truth exists, and it is objective, external to me, and not dependent on my feelings. Rules generally exist for good reasons. If it is a human rule, and it turns out to be a bad rule, it can be changed. But if it is a Biblical rule, it won't be bad, and it won't ever need to be changed. God is going to judge you and me by the rules written in His book. Let us heed them before it is too late. --John Temples