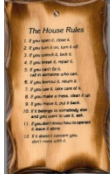


Family Rules

Galatians 6



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There's a sort of typical list of family rules. You might have had some similar ones. From what I remember when I was young. We had the usual ones. Don't talk with your mouth full. Don't throw stuff in the house. Say please and thank you. Don't throw the kittens in the air just so you can see if they really do land on their feet.

What were your family rules?

Well, we're into the last chapter of Galatians this morning. And this is a letter where the apostle Paul's re-established his gospel. In the face of a different message. Paul says. We're one family of faith through God's grace to us in Jesus. That's the message of the gospel. And a curse on anyone who says any different.

And here's the key. Here's the thing that might have gone under the radar on the way through. Paul says. We all share. In the one SPIRIT.

Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free people, men and women. We all share in that one SPIRIT. In God's new family of faith. Let me just take you first of all to verse 25 of chapter 5. This is a key verse.

Since we LIVE BY THE SPIRIT, let us keep IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT.

This is the spirit that comes by faith in Jesus (chapter 3). The spirit God planned to come way back in the promise of blessing to Abraham.

Chapter 4 it's the spirit of sonship. The spirit that craves in us for the righteousness we're hoping for.

And chapter 5 Paul says.

^{NIV} **Galatians 5:16** So I say, LIVE BY THE SPIRIT and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

It's like Bill pointed out for us last week. You're in Christ, and you put the old person to death. But the flesh is still kicking. It's like we're patients in the recovery ward and there's this war going on in us. For, verse 17, next verse there.

Verse 17

^{NIV} **Galatians 5:17** For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

But verse 18 but...

^{NIV} **Galatians 5:18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

And verse 22 there's a list of the fruit of the spirit.

Which brings us back to verse 25 again.

Since we live by the Spirit. The spirit that comes by faith. The Spirit that's God's gift. The Spirit that craves for righteousness. The spirit of sonship..

Since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Write it on some butchers paper and stick it on the wall.

Because there's the family rule.

The new family's not a family of any particular nationality. It's a family of new spirituality.

And here's the family rule. Paul says. We're to live by the spirit. Not the flesh. WE're to KEEP IN STEP with the spirit.

There's a new series of dancing with the stars coming on shortly. And that's one of the things they look for as they judge the celebrity dancers. They're used to being sportspeople or racing car drivers or something and all of a sudden they're thrown onto the dance floor. And they've got to keep IN STEP... with their new dancing partner.

That's what Paul says we're to do as God's kids with the spirit. We need to keep in step.

It's because of that we're not under law. It's the dancing analogy again isn't it. If you're led by the spirit. You're not under law.

Now I guess that begs the question....how do you do that? What does that look like. . to keep in step with the spirit? For a lot of us it's a strange concept because to us spiritual people can be those off the planet types who sell crystals and tell horoscopes. Either that. Or they're people in the church who come across like they're spiritual because every second word's a spiritual sounding word. Bless this and bless that and they use words like justifi-sanctification. Which is a word I made up. But if you use that sort of language you can sound pretty spiritual.

But Paul says. In our family. We keep in step with the spirit. But it's not through levitating off the ground or speaking in tongues. Or things that might come across as being spiritual in an ethereal sense. It's something much more grounded, and that is through right thinking about yourself. V26

Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Because that's the sign of being unspiritual. When Christians can't get on with one another.

Let's not be conceited Paul says.

Dictionary definition.

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having an excessively favorable opinion of one's abilities, appearance, etc.

the greek word Paul uses is kenodoxos.

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And you might recognize the doxos part of the word, which is where we get the word doxology from. And Doxos..... just means glory. A doxology is when we give God glory. Kenodoxos. Is about a different kind of glory. It's about self glory.

So Paul's saying. Let's not be full of ourselves, and our own glory.

Provoking and envying each other. Because that's exactly what happens when you're full of yourself and your own glory. Life just becomes one big competition. And everyone else is either below you on the ladder. Or above you. If their below you. You've got to keep proving yourself. So you provoke them.

You're like the head Bull in the herd. And you're letting those others know just whose boss. Or on the other hand if you're down a few rungs.

You're looking up....and you're full of bitterness and envy.

It's typical sibling behavior isn't it?

And maybe it happens in the footy club. And maybe it happens between the school mums. And maybe it happens in politics. Maybe it happens in the work place.

But let's not do that in our family Paul says. Let's keep in step with the spirit. By not having an excessively favorable opinion of ourselves. By not self-glorifying.

So let's look at a concrete example. There in verse 1 chapter 6.

There's that family term. Brothers. Men and women. Jews and Gentiles.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

What does the spiritual person do...when they see someone in some sort of sin.

And you'd guess maybe it's something to do with what he's just been talking about. Those acts of the sinful nature. Chapter 5 verse 19: impurity, hatred, discord, immorality - there's a whole list there. Those desires of the heart that the will chooses and the mind justifies. Those good things from God that have been twisted. And it's interesting that he uses the word caught there.

Because that's what sin's like. It's a slippery, clever trap. And people don't generally get out of bed and say. I think I'll go out and sin today. It's not like that. There's a kind of a trap happening.

If that happens to someone. Here's the spiritual thing to do.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

Your job's to carefully, delicately, untangle them.

And your aim...is their restoration. And not your own self glorification.

You can only act that way. If you're not in this constant subtle maybe even subconscious competition.

Because if you are. And you see someone sinning. You'll either be judgmental
And you either smugly do nothing, and feel good about the fact that this just
confirms the fact of your superiority. Or maybe you say something but... you do it
in a way that puts them down.

You either do that. Or if you're envious...you secretly rub your hands. And take
delight in the fact. Maybe very subtly drop it in as gossip just so other people will
know as well. Hope to bring them down a cog or two.

And either way. You're no help at all...to the other person. And either way.
You're not acting in step with the spirit.

So here's the family rule. Restore them gently. It's an attitude thing.

People have pretty finely tuned radars when it comes to this sort of thing.

So don't come in with the heavy hand. And don't be smug.

Your MO, is restoration. So you tread lightly. You speak gently and humbly.

Now let me just say. That's no guarantee of success. You can do all that. And it can still blow up in your face. You can't control the outcome. But you can search yourself. And you can.....make sure you've got the right attitude. And you can be gentle, and you can aim for restoration.

It's good for the family. And it's good for you as well Paul says. Because there's the danger there he says that you might be tempted as well. There's that proverb isn't there that pride comes before a fall.

And Paul says watch yourself. Or you also may be tempted.

It happens with live wires a fair bit doesn't it. Where the power lines have come down. The rescuer can get themselves electrocuted as well if they're not careful.

So watch yourself. Have the right attitude about yourself. And verse 2. He's just given us one example. But here's the principle in all situations. It's about carrying each other's burdens. Which again. Is pretty hard if you're competing. If you're interested in self glory. Carry each other's burdens....

And in THIS WAY... you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Now that's not to say you just put yourself down all the time. He's just saying. Don't measure yourself by comparing.

Verse 3

If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each should carry his own load.

If you're being booked for doing 80 in a 60 zone you can't say but what about the other guy who was doing 90?

Well you can...but it doesn't change what you've done. So test yourself without comparing. And then you can be proud.

So..... if you were making up a list of the new family rules from what Paul says here you'd notice a fair bit of a disparity wouldn't you? With the old rules. The law of Moses. You'd need a book and a couple of ink wells to list off all the laws of Moses. But the new rules are pretty light on aren't they?

But that's the difference between a principle and a rule isn't it.

On Wednesday night there was an incident at our place. A whole tub of that thick white zinc creamwiped on the carpet. And the beds. The sheets, the blankets. On the toys. And the walls. Zinc everywhere. And we're still getting it off.

But you know. Technically we don't have a rule that says no wiping zinc cream on the walls. Although we do now.

But that's the nature of specific rules isn't it? You can't have a rule to cover every situation. That's why the taxation laws just keep getting added to. Because people just find different ways to get around the old laws. So you have to keep adding to them.

But the principle covers pretty much everything.

And here's another principle that you need to know. Because even though there's a freedom that comes from the gospel. That doesn't change the fact that your actions have consequences. Verse 7.

Galatians 6:7-8 ⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

You're doing one or the other. And maybe sometimes outwardly you might not be able to tell. But you're in step with one or the other. And Bill touched on this last week as well. It's not works that earn your favour with God one way or the other. But they can certainly be an indication of who you're in step with.

So here's a good strategy for making sure you're sowing and reaping the right stuff. Verse 9 he says there... be a DO GOODER.

Galatians 6:9-10 ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

And nowadays the do gooders are the baddies. They're the people responsible for political correctness amongst other things. But Paul's talking about actions that are focused on the good of others. And verse 10 if you like concrete sort of rules you'll hate this one. He says.

¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

It's a great picture. See the Spirit's not just a unseen straightjacket that helps you to not do bad things. It's the driving force that God uses to spur you into action. To do good. If you're filled with the spirit. You're all fuelled up and ready to go. So here's the rule.

As you have opportunity. Do good.

It's sort of like a blank canvas. There's the canvas. There's the paint. Go for it.

I love the principle because you go through those seasons in life. Where sometimes you don't have much opportunity. Maybe you're sick. Maybe you're

24/7 looking after your kids. So there's less opportunity. So do good as you have opportunity.

On the other hand the blank canvas picture's a bit scary.....I mean.....I wonder....how do you think of the things you've been given? Things like your skills and abilities. Your knowledge. Your connections. Your money, your car, your health. Your house. I wonder. If you acknowledge that those things are from God. Do you think he gave them to you for your sole benefit? Or just for you and your family? Or are they resources. That present you with all sorts of opportunities....to do good?

As you have the opportunity.... When you've got your health. When you've got time. When you've got those resources...What a great opportunity. To do good. Are you doing that?

I have some friends who bought a house they wanted to renovate. And there's nothing wrong with that. Except that for years and years. They had no time for anything else. They made for themselves.... no opportunity to do good. And it's so easy to do that. So easy to fill your life so full of things, even good things. That you cancel out that opportunity to do good.

What are you planning for your retirement? There's a question. You'll never have as much available time. What are you going to do with it? What are you doing with it...if you're retired?

House rules. As you have the opportunity. Do good. Especially to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Don't compare yourself with others. Just examine yourself. And do good. And take pride in that.

Speaking about opportunities. As he finishes off this letter. You'll see there from verse 12 one more opportunity to have a swipe at his opponents.

And Paul's going to take it.

Because when it comes to motivation. These guys are not in it for your good. Verse 12.

¹² Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised.

They just want to make a good impression. They're pushing for you to be circumcised. All you are to them is a notch in their belt.

They're SELF GLORYING in your flesh.

It's the question of motivation. Which is always a great question to ask. I always ask myself if someone's trying to convince me of something. I ask myself – what's their motivation? What's in it for them?

And he says if someone's trying to sell you the law. Then they're not in it for your good.

They don't want to be persecuted for the cross. And even though they don't even fully obey the law they want to boast about your flesh he says.

But my boast's different. May I never boast. Except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he talks about a double crucifixion. The world to me and me to the world.

In light of the cross. The outward family recognition test is gone. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. What counts is a new creation. And if you're in Christ. If you've received the spirit. That's what you are. If you're looking for something outward. Verse 17 Paul says. I bear in my body the marks of Jesus.

Which are the outward signs of someone who's been flogged and stoned to restore others through the gospel. Which are the battered bruises of a follower of Jesus who's spent himself doing good, and bearing the burden for God's family at every opportunity.