

### Beginnings – ORIGIN (*Where did we come from?*)

- Only Two Choices
- Realize the Significance
- Is it Faith or Science?
  - LAB - Lookable, Accessible, Breakable
- Guess at the Evidence
- Inspect the Evidence
  - Universe = "Decay"
  - Age of the Earth = "Can't Say"
  - Origin of Life by Chance = "No Way"
  - Evolution of Species and Man = "Lacks Genes and Tweens"
- No Compromise
  - DON'T - Death, Orders of Creation, Names in genealogies, Ten Commandments refer to seven-day week

### Intent of Life – LIFE (*Why are we here?*)

- Love - GOD and MAN
- Increase - GROW
- Faithfulness - Time, Talent, Treasure
- Eternity – Past, Present, Future

### Authority – POWER (*Who's in charge?*) A God Who is:

- Personal and Loving
- Omnipotent
- Wise and All-Knowing
- Everywhere and Eternal
- Righteous and Reliable

### Standards – RULES (*What are the rules?*) God's rules are:

- Revealed supernaturally, not derived by reason
- Universal and apply to everyone, everywhere, all the time
- Loving
- Enforced
- Steadfast

## L - Loving



*If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. Psalms 119:92-93*

### **God gave us rules that are for our good and in our own best interests.**

Just as God is Loving, so are His rules motivated by Love. His rules are not capricious, selfish, ego-feeding, or designed to show off His power and authority. Again, this is an extension of God's character – God is love, so His rules are consistent with Who He Is.

This is an astonishing contrast with the other rule systems we find in the world. In most cases, governments and rulers advance their own interests ahead of the interests of those they govern. If a law increases the power and rewards for a ruler, that law is likely to be promoted by the ruler regardless of whether it benefits the people being ruled. This is really just a reflection of man's sin nature – by nature my first priority is pleasing me.

Our self-willed nature (the Bible sometimes uses the term “flesh”) doesn't easily recognize the benefits of God's rules. When we want to do something and realize it is against God's rules we're like a small child - we don't like to be told what to do. But just like the small child we are fools in need of a loving parent to keep us from doing harm to ourselves and to others. That's the purpose of God's rules.

Let's look at the Ten Commandments as examples of some ways that God's rules are loving:

**1. Have no other gods**

When we recognize that He is the only True God, we won't suffer all the consequences of a rebellious fool who puts trust in a false god.

**2. Don't make or worship idols**

God designed us to worship Him. If we make an image of Him it will be less than Him. We will end up wasting our lives worshipping something vain and worthless rather than growing in our knowledge of Who He Really Is.

**3. Don't treat God's name lightly**

Careless disrespect to God with our words promotes careless disrespect to God with the rest of our lives. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We benefit from wisdom and suffer from foolishness. God says that He is jealous for His name, and treating His name with honor helps us avoid suffering.

**4. Keep the Sabbath holy to the Lord**

The Sabbath was instituted for us as a pattern of rest from work - the only reason God “rested” on the seventh day was to model this pattern. It was established for our good. Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and that it is always proper to do good to others on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is an opportunity to pause from our work and rejoice in God's goodness to us, and to refresh our relationship with Him and other believers.

Some Christians believe this command was not confirmed in the New Testament, so it is no longer valid. Even if that were true we still need rest. The Sabbath rest is a gift from God that reassures us that we don't need to work all the time in order to please Him.

**5. Don't Dishonor Parents**

God promises blessings to us if we honor our parents. And when we become parents we experience blessings again as our children honor us.

**6. Don't Murder**

Life belongs to God. If others could take my life or the life of my loved ones whenever they wanted, it would be difficult to lead a peaceful and quiet life.

**7. Don't Commit Adultery**

This rule protects the sanctity of a man and woman becoming one in marriage, and avoids the pain of a broken relationship and all the hurt this causes to other people (including children).

**8. Don't Steal**

We enjoy the use of property that we own. It would not be enjoyable to live in constant fear of theft (just ask the people who live in cities where this IS a daily occurrence).

## 9. Don't Lie

A world that is full of deceit and dishonesty makes life much harder because we are forced to constantly protect ourselves from the consequences of lies. If we can trust people to speak truth and to keep their word then we can be happier and more open with others.

## 10. Don't Covet

One key to a happy life is to be content and thankful for what we have. It's okay to have goals that we're working toward, but if discontentment is our only motivator we usually won't be happy no matter what we get. To covet is to want something else so badly that we aren't thankful for what we already have. God tells us not to covet so that we can experience joy every day with whatever we have.

**All of God's rules are in our best interests because God loves us and knows what is best for us.**

# E - Enforced

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*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)-- **if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*** 2

Peter 2:4-9

**God is just, and His justice requires that He punish sin.** Many people don't seem to believe this. There seems to be a popular and incorrect notion (even within the Church) that God is a tolerant grandfatherly being who, at the end, will bend the rules for us so that most of us can get into heaven.

The Bible tells us that God will not bend the rules and that no one will think him "grandfatherly" when He unleashes His wrath on sinners. God's justice is patient, but it will be satisfied. If God was going to bend the rules for us then there was no reason for Jesus to come to earth as a man and suffer and die for us. If God was going to ignore His own rules then Jesus didn't need to die. So the gospel itself is a stark reminder that God's justice is an unavoidable terror for those who continue in rebellion against Him.

The book of Revelation is full of images and descriptions that are frightening and gruesome. Even if we don't understand or agree exactly how to interpret Revelation, we should be able to agree that God's wrath and power will be poured out on sin in ways that are difficult to even imagine. The scenes of Revelation show God bringing a series of punishments on those who rebel against him, each successive judgment worse than the one before. The rebellious will continue in their struggle against God until the end, and God seems to draw out the struggle to demonstrate His wrath. At the end Jesus simply speaks, and His words destroy the armies of His enemies.

**For Christians** the punishment for sin was paid in full by Jesus Christ. Our sins were attributed to Him, and He suffered pain and death for them. But God raised Him from the dead so that His atonement also is attributed to us. The

punishment of death and Hell is no longer due for Christians, but ***God makes His wrath visible so that we understand the depths of His mercy:***

*What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? **What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory--*** Romans 9:22-23

**For non-Christians** the penalty for sin (death and eternal suffering in Hell) is still due. There are certainly consequences of sin in this life, and the penalties can seem severe. But the consequences in this life pale in comparison to the terrible, just, and forever wrath of God described in Scripture.

Most other worldviews don't really confront this issue directly. Some worldviews say that life just ends with death so the only consequences are in this life. Others say that we all eventually get to "heaven" as they define it, but it just takes longer for some of us. Non-Christian worldviews that have a concept of heaven believe that heaven is "earned" based on good works in life (or multiple lives for the reincarnation folks). Only the faiths that reference the Bible (such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and some Christian cults) typically have a concept of Hell with punishment for sins. See the chart in Appendix B for more details.

Regardless of the different beliefs about rules today, we know that ***at the end there will be no question - God's rules are Enforced.***

## The Fear of God

The Bible often mentions the fear of God. The fear of God leads to wisdom and righteousness. The lack of a fear of God leads to foolishness and wickedness.

In today's church we typically emphasize God's love and mercy and talk about Jesus as our friend. God's justice, wrath, holiness, and hatred of sin are not popular sermon topics. But they are as applicable to our view of God as His love is.

To define "the fear of God" is challenging. God calls Himself our loving Father, and that role seems inconsistent with our normal concept of fear. Yet we're also told in Hebrews 12:28b-29 ... *so worship God acceptably **with reverence and awe**, for our "God is a consuming fire."*

I think one way we can pursue a proper fear of God is to regularly study God's attributes so that we don't focus only on aspects of God that make us comfortable. To borrow a quote about Narnia's Aslan, "he's good, but he's not safe." As God's adopted children and as joint heirs with Christ we can come boldly to the throne of grace and talk to our Heavenly Father. But as imperfect finite creatures contemplating a perfect and infinite God we should never treat Him casually as if He is one of us.

God is God and there is none like Him. We see in Scripture that those who encountered God or His messengers fell on their faces in fear. We can trust Him, but we should always remember that if we saw Him more clearly as He Is, we would fall on our faces as well.