

Topical Message – 14 Mar 21

“Rigid Rules vs Biblical Principles”

Introduction

***What is discipleship?** As Christians we’re not here to do what is right in our own eyes, we’re here to be becoming followers or disciples of Jesus Christ

1. We’re bought w/ price – We’re owned by a loving God
2. Our goal is to worship God by becoming more like Him and leading others to accept His great salvation

***Remember whom this msg of discipleship is for?**

1. It is for Christians, not the unsaved
2. Does no good to give the unsaved principles for growth w/o 1st giving them life from the dead!
3. Exp - Jesus didn’t bring up the unsaved’s habits like at the wedding of Cana
4. What are you going to do, clean up their earthly life so they can go to hell #2?

***Now, there are times for Rules.** Within the realm of God-given authority, we each need to establish rules for our realms. Schools, homes, work places.

1. Especially, the younger the learner, the more that the rules need to be clearly defined.
2. These rules should lovingly apply Biblical Principles in a specific way to a specific time/place
3. But even then, goal should be to emphasis the enduring Biblical Principle behind making the rules

***We're talking about making Christian disciples.**

1. This is a Biblical method for transforming yourself and others into the image of Christ Jesus
2. So, don't go beyond the Biblical Principles into making Rigid Rules for discipleship

Today we'll show how replacing Biblical Principles with Rigid Rules harms that advancement of the Gospel in the following 3 ways.

Then we'll review 3 live examples of this premise

1st Way that replacing Biblical Principles w/ Rigid Rules harms the Gospel is that **it engenders more questions than answers leaving people confused rather than satisfied w/ God** (Matt 15:1-8)

Read Matt 15:1-2

1. This hand-washing to them wasn't about being physically clean. It was a spiritual issue to them.
2. The Biblical Principle behind the matter is to be spiritually clean, living in open-face before God
3. They made dozens of rules for this including hand-washing.

Read Matt 15:3-6

1. Many of their Rigid Rules were actually designed to help them skirt around Biblical Principles
2. Notice the B.P. that Jesus brought up – Honor your mother and father
 - a. It's a principle or methodology; not deeply defined lines of rules

Read Matt 15:7-8

1. Rigid Rules engenders more questions rather than bringing you into the heart of God's mind
 - a. Spiritually wash for a meal, but what if we're only plucking some corn in the field?
 - b. Spiritually wash for a meal, but should we also spiritually wash the pots and pans?
 - c. Spiritually wash for a meal, but what if we fall in the river & accidentally drink water?
 - d. There's confusion & unending scenarios
2. Biblical Principles leave you satisfied with knowing what leads to God's heart
 - a. When different Christians try enacting different Rigid rules there's conflict
 - i. Read I Cor 14:33
 - b. Read Phil 4:8-9 – the result is peace
 - c. II Cor 1:12 – Simply listening to the H.S.

2nd Way that replacing Biblical Principles w/ Rigid Rules harms the Gospel is that **it diverts discipleship energy into worthless enforcement actions causing needless offense & exasperation** (Galatians, Rom 14, II Tim 2)

Give flavor of Galatians – legalists returning to Law

Read Galatians 2:4-5

1. Paul didn't waste time debating rules w/ others
2. That's a diversion from Paul mission

Read Galatians 2:11-14

1. Why attempt their rigid rules?
2. Whether you're attempting to create your own rules or keep the OT rules perfectly...
 - a. It will only waste time/energy
 - b. And create strife and frustration

What is the conclusion of Paul in Galatians? 3:10-11

1. Live like God completed the rules for you
2. Read Gal 5:1–And don't go back into bondage

Give flavor of Romans 14 – Limit liberties to not offend

Read Romans 14:15-19

1. So, on either side of the rigid or loose rules and preferences issue...
 - a. Don't let your rules & preferences keep you from focusing on the weighty matters of the kingdom of God & the development of the fruits of the Spirit
2. Doing that causes needless offence that you know need to spend time resolving.

Read II Timothy 2:14-17

1. Be intentional about not letting rigid rules and additional teaching cloud & zap your time away
2. There is no end to dealing w/ false teaching

Read II Timothy 2:22-26

1. Vs 22 – Notice the Biblical Principles to follow
2. Vs 23 – Entertaining their positions will leave you exasperated while the real work of the Gospel goes nearly or entirely undone

3rd Way that replacing Biblical Principles w/ Rigid Rules harms the Gospel is that **it misrepresents God's desire for our holiness & discipleship causing doubt or legalism** (Matt 7:15-19 & Matt 23:15) Matt 15:3,7-8

Read Matt 7:15-19

1. There're after-effects of what we're teaching others.
2. If we teach them self-made rules that aren't Biblical, even if we created from a Biblical Principle...
 - a. They grow up and loss their trust in you b/c you told them the rule was Biblical but wasn't
 - b. They may even loss their trust in God b/c of our bad teaching
3. Let the fruit of your teaching be that of correctly representing God's principles and not that of making up specific rules.
4. What's equally as bad as losing trust is if they believe that you're Rigid Rules are Biblical
 - a. Read Matt 23:15 – You just made them 2-fold the child of hell instead of helping them

We're here as ambassadors of Christ, as Sons & Daughters of the King

1. When Moses misrepresented God by striking the rock, this broke God's heart and didn't allow Moses to enter the Promised Land
 - a. If we add rules to interpret a principle and then teach as Biblical Law, we find ourselves misrepresenting God
2. Matt 15:7-8 tells us that "lips make rules, hearts follow principles"
3. Gal 4:1-7 tells us that "Servants have rules, sons follow their father"
4. As children of God we no longer have to say "is this right or wrong" but we can simply ask, "will this please my father? – Chuck Smith

Examples –

1. Dress and Appearance

- a. Rigid Rule – *Guys shouldn't wear dresses*
 - i. Engenders more questions
 1. Can girls wear neck ties?
 2. Can guys wear bath ropes?
 - ii. Diverts Discipleship Energy
 1. Article: Indian parliament debating a dress code only to settle on none
 2. Then it takes time to settle the emotions and get back to real business
 - iii. Misrepresents God's Desire
 1. God is not interested in whether men have fabric clinging to their legs or not
- b. Biblical Principle – *Each gender should dress to appear as that gender (Deut 22:5)*
 - i. Thus supporting God's gender identities
 - ii. Leaves you satisfied understanding better the heart of God

2. Drugs and Alcohol

a. Rigid Rule – *Christians shouldn't drink beer*

i. Engenders more questions

1. Can they drink wine / mixed drinks?
2. Shouldn't we stop drinking sugary drinks...what about caffeinated drinks?

ii. Diverts Discipleship Energy

1. Should church be spending time talking about which *individual* substances should be allowed in your body...this is endless

iii. Misrepresents God's Desire

1. What comes out of you spiritually is more important than what's going into you.
2. B/c what's coming out of your heart will determine what you put into yourself

b. Biblical Principle – *Christians should be yielded to the H. S. & not brought under the power of anything else (I Cor 6:12 & Eph 5:18)*

- i. Leaves you satisfied understanding better the heart of God

3. Dating and Attraction

a. Rigid Rule – *Christians don't kiss a boyfriend or girlfriend unless they intend to marry them*

i. Engenders more questions

1. What if it's a kiss on the cheek?

2. Should we stay out past 11pm?

ii. Diverts Discipleship Energy

1. Emotion/energy that goes into creating, checking, enforcing these rules is exhausting

2. You risk losing a friendship that could otherwise be edifying each other

iii. Misrepresents God's Desire

1. In many ways God love affection

b. Biblical Principle – *Keep your heart w/ all diligence, for out of it flow the issues of life, and watch out for flattery and don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (Prov 4:23, Prov 7:21, II Cor 6:14)*

i. Leaves you satisfied understanding better the heart of God

Conclusion

So be careful not to take good Biblical Principles and extrapolate them into your own Rigid Rules.

- 1. It engenders more questions than answers leaving people confused rather than satisfied**
 - a. God's principles are perfect the way they are
- 2. It diverts discipleship energy into worthless enforcement actions causing needless offense & exasperation**
 - a. Let's keep our efforts on the main thing!
- 3. It misrepresents God's desire for our holiness & discipleship causing doubt or legalism**
 - a. I don't want to be the reason some is believing a false teaching.
 - b. Worst, I don't want to be the reason someone begins to doubt that they can trust God & His Word

Read Gal 6:15-16a

We're spiritual beings empowered by the H. S. not serving earthly man-made rules that are limited