

What Rules Does Christianity Have?

Galatians 5

What rules are there in Christianity?

Within most religions, there are many rules.

Most Muslims consider drinking alcohol and eating pork, for example, to not be permissible under Islamic law, and many will only eat meat that has been slaughtered according to the halal method. d is angry, and in the New Testament, God is loving.

Prayer (salat) includes the call to prayer five times a day, using a particular liturgy and at pre-fixed times, facing the direction of the city of Mecca. These five times occur throughout the day at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening.

Hasidic Jews' clothing is generally loose and dark in color. It consists of five layers, including underlining, shirt, long shirt,

waisted coat, and a long coat, and all this is crowned by headgear, a hat, or other traditional fur-made head coverings.

Jews may eat any animal that has cloven hooves and chews its cud. Leviticus 11:3; Deuteronomy 14:6. Any land mammal that does not have both qualities is forbidden. The Torah specifies that the camel, the rock badger, the hare, and the pig are not kosher because each lacks one of these qualifications. On the other hand, sheep, cattle, goats, and deer are kosher.

Hindu puja or worship ritual at your home should have a Hindu god's statue of more than 15 inches. We should not have deities bigger than this.

Puja should always be performed facing towards East or North. In no circumstances the pooja of Hindu Gods is to be

done facing the South. Also, one should not sit facing your back towards the Hindu gods, murti.

What about Christianity? What rules do we have?

What Does The Bible Say?

So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. (Galatians 5:1 NLT)

5 But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. 6 For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love. (Galatians 5:5-6 NLT)

Paul tells us that Christianity is free from rules like other religions.

13 For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature.

Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. 14 For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. (Galatians 5:13–15 NLT)

37 Jesus replied, “ ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37–40 NLT)

Christianity frees us from religious rules but pushes us to one action, love.

How Can You Obey?

16 So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. 17 The sinful nature

wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. 18 But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. (Galatians 5:16–18 NLT)

Christianity is different from all other religions because it is about being, not doing.

19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19–21 NLT)

These sins eventually hurt you and make you less attractive to others.

22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these

things! 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the

passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and

crucified them there. 25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us

follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. 26 Let us

not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of

one another. (Galatians 5:22–26 NLT)

When you allow the Holy Spirit to guide you, These

behaviors make us happier and more appealing to others.

Christianity is not about rules but a relationship with God where He helps us become like Him in character.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

Where is Galatia?

Galatia is a Roman province in Asia Minor. The area splits north and south.

Northern Galatia is a mountainous area of Asia Minor, where Celts from Gaul settled in the 3rd century bc. It is called 'Galatia' after the Gauls.

Southern Galatia is a district added by the Romans, including the cities of Antioch (known locally as Pisidia, to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria) and Iconium. These are places Paul and Barnabas visited in ad 47–48, on their first missionary journey (Acts 13 and 14). We don't know if Paul visited the north, nor to which part of Galatia he wrote this letter.

Explore:

Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit to live in us. The Spirit's presence in the life of believers is for more than mere comfort or emotional well-being. He aims to affect life itself.

Believers Must Choose if They Will Follow the Holy Spirit or Their Sinful Nature (Galatians 5:16-18)

In verse 16, Paul instructed the Galatian believers to walk (or live) by the Spirit. This means to live under the Spirit's influence and control at all times. This is not automatic; it is a choice we must make from moment to moment. Doing this will keep us from giving in to the desires of our sinful nature. Without the help of the Spirit, all the willpower in the world is not sufficient to keep us victorious over sin. We need the power of the Holy Spirit. We need to consciously align our lives with Him.

It all has to do with desires. Both the Spirit and our sinful natures have competing desires. Those desires are as opposite as black is from white, and up is from down. It is not a peaceful coexistence. They fight for control over us. The conflict keeps us from doing what we might want to do. The Spirit seeks to keep us from doing what our sinful nature entices us to do, and the sinful nature seeks to pull us away from doing what is good and right. The Christian life is a struggle, but we have the Spirit to help us if we allow Him to lead and control us (verses 17-18).

Believers who want to please God will find themselves in direct conflict with sin and the flesh. God does not leave us to struggle alone, however. Instead, He works within us through His Holy Spirit to help us do what is pleasing to Him. As we choose to follow the leading of the Spirit and allow Him to control us, He empowers us to overcome the desires of our sinful nature. The more we live under His influence and control, the more victorious we are over sin, and the more we understand and fulfill God's will for us.

Explore:

Some translations speak of walking in the Spirit, while others speak of living in the Spirit. The word is used in other passages to describe walking from one place to another, with no particular spiritual significance. Walking was used however, in both the Old and New Testaments, as an image for how we live.

This is the way. Walk in it (Isaiah 30:21) referred not to one's feet and the path they followed, but rather to the way of obedience and light. In other words, Isaiah was talking about how people live. Walking speaks to our need to honor God in all we do, even the most ordinary things of our lives. Walking is an apt metaphor for how we live.

Explore:

Following Our Sinful Nature Leads to Sinful Attitudes and Behavior; Following the Spirit Produces Godly Characteristics and Behavior (Galatians 5:19-26)

The two ways of walking (or living) involve two different sets of actions or characteristics. The first list, the works of the flesh, tells us what comes about when one's life is dominated by the sinful nature. This rather depressing list of works (5:19-21) is

what we find in most human societies and endeavors apart from God. Whether we go to new jobs, new cities, or new continents, we take this spiritual baggage with us. Paul had already warned the Galatians about this. His preaching and teaching to them went beyond evangelism and covered how to live as a citizen of God's kingdom. Regular, ongoing practice of these works of the flesh indicates that a person has not been transformed by Christ and therefore will not be part of God's kingdom (verse 21b).

Marriages, political parties, and civic institutions all claim lofty goals that few would reject. Yet, left to themselves with no godly influence, they will nearly always give birth to division, rancor, and bitterness. This is unfortunately the "normal" pattern of humanity.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit works out a very special fruit in the lives of believers. Notice the difference between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Works speaks of efforts, of

forcing things in a certain direction. Fruit speaks of natural results over time. It takes time for the Holy Spirit to change our hearts and attitudes, but He wastes no time beginning the process within us. When a person lives under the control and influence of the Spirit, the Spirit produces wonderful, godly qualities in that person's life (verses 22-23) Imagine living in a society where people exhibit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and the other qualities listed here. Even the unredeemed would not mind living in a society where everyone else lived in such a manner! They would like the fruit of the Spirit, without surrendering to Christ's lordship.

In verses 24-26, Paul challenged believers to live according to the Spirit. We are to live up to what is true of us. After all, the old ways that would pull us back to the distractions of self-based living and its desires have been crucified (verse 24). We must not view the old sinful nature as a loved one whose passing we mourn. No, it is rather a vile enemy who has been executed, who

means nothing more to us from now on. It pulls us toward what is ungodly and evil. But when a person comes to Christ and allows the Holy Spirit to lead and control him or her, the Spirit produces godly qualities and characteristics in that believer.

We have a choice. We can give in to the desires of our sinful nature, or we can choose to deny those desires and to follow the Spirit's leadership. When we do, He makes us more like Christ.

Do we claim new life in the Spirit? Then let us follow the Spirit's leading and prompting every moment of every day (verse 25). The image is staying in step or in rhythm with someone. Some in our society view the idea of walking in step with others, for instance soldiers marching in formation, as some- thing to avoid. Yet, we find a certain appeal in "flash mobs." How ridiculous it would be for people in a flash mob to go their own way rather than staying in sync with what the others are doing. Similarly, the Holy Spirit has deployed His

people around the world. By following His leading and prompting, we can keep in sync and in step with Him.

Let us move together toward the goal (verse 26). Staying in step with the Spirit keeps us from following our own pace, in our own direction, for our own benefit or reputation. It will keep us from becoming conceited.

Our Heavenly Father wants us to get along with one another, to help one another. Our sinful nature would lead us to compete with or aggravate and provoke our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we can follow the Spirit instead. In a race, we cannot stick out a foot to trip another runner without slowing our own progress. Our goal is not to arrive alone at the finish line ahead of everyone else. It is to arrive at the finish line along with all those we have brought with us!

The fruit of the Spirit is not something we can manufacture in our own efforts. Neither is it, however, something we can forget

about, assuming that it will eventually show up. We are called to live in the active pursuit of the things of God. We can choose to follow the Spirit each day, allowing Him to produce godly character in us. Living this way will keep us humble as well. We will not feel the need to compete with or provoke others. Sin wants to divide us from one another as we compete in its desires and distractions. The Holy Spirit works to bring us together through peaceable fruit, moving together toward the goal.

Explore:

Sometimes the New Testament speaks of how the old nature has been crucified. In this passage, however, Paul says that it is believers themselves who perform this crucifixion. I must put my own sinful nature on that cross and put it to death.

Crucifixion usually brought about a long, drawn out, painful death. Once the criminal was nailed to the cross, it could be

hours, even days, before he breathed no more. The believer's sinful nature may linger on, breathing still, but its death will come. The believer is to understand that there is no coming down from the cross. There is nothing to mourn about the passing of the sinful nature. It meant to destroy us, eternally. We must move forward in life without it. We must follow our Leader.

The word for walking in the Spirit in verse 25 is not the same word translated walk or live in verse 16. In verse 25, the verb indicates walking in line behind a leader. This is a purposeful, directed, and intentional keeping in step with our leader.

Explore:

Note that it is fruit singular, not fruits plural. All of these qualities make up the fruit of the Spirit. Believers cannot excuse lacking any particular quality or characteristic as “that’s just the

way I am.” The Spirit works in us to produce all of these traits in making us in the image of Christ.

Explore:

When Paul said that the works of the flesh are obvious or evident, what did that mean? It does not mean that they are all practiced out in the open, even though they often are. It means that they are obviously the product of the sinful nature, not God’s Holy Spirit.

Explore:

The Bible teaches that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. That is reflected in Galatians 5:17-18. Encourage parents and grandparents to discuss this truth with family members.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS: 1. Believers Must Choose if They Will Follow the Holy Spirit or Their Sinful Nature.

2. Following Our Sinful Nature Leads to Sinful Attitudes and Behavior; Following the Spirit Produces Godly Characteristics and Behavior.

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: In this section of his letter to the believers in Galatia, written while on his second or third missionary journey, the apostle Paul declared that we are made righteous by faith in Christ, not by works of the Law.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ-followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

What kind of prayer can we pray which is more likely to be answered?

Question 2 of 5

In what ways are the desires of the sinful nature and the desires of the Spirit against each other?

Question 3 of 5

Why doesn't Christianity have rules like other religions?

Question 4 of 5

Give examples of how believers experience both the prompting of the Spirit and the pull of the sinful nature when tempted to sin.

Question 5 of 5

What does it look like when we become more like Christ?